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Dec. 20, 1872:

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MEMOIR

OF

JOSEPH CURTIS,

A MODEL MAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MEANS AND ENDS," "THE LINWOODS," "HOPE LESLIE,"
"LIVE AND LET LIVE," ETC., ETC.

"I pray thee write me, then,
As one, at least, who loves his fellow-men.
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
He came again with great awakening light,
And showed those names which love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adam's name led all the rest!"

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1858.

TO THE

FRIENDS OF JOSEPH CURTIS,

AND

TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK,

This Memoir

OF THEIR DEVOTED FRIEND AND HELPER

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY HIS FRIEND,

C. M. SEDGWICK.

New York, 25*th June*, 1858.

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
I.	BOYHOOD	7
II.	CLERKSHIP AND MARRIAGE	25
III.	HOME LIFE	36
IV.	THE MANUMISSION SOCIETY	54
V.	THE HOUSE OF REFUGE	61
VI.	SCHOOL FOR APPRENTICES	107
VII.	THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK	136
VIII.	CLOSE OF LIFE	176

MEMOIR

OF

JOSEPH CURTIS.

CHAPTER I.

BOYHOOD.

"The child is father to the man."

It was the fashion of the elder times to go to oracles to learn what the course of a man's life was to be. To our young friends we say there are surer oracles than that of Delphos in your own every-day lives. Observe your playmates. Mark those who treat their parents and teachers with respect and obedience, and those who do not; those who use no profane or indecent language; *who speak the truth; who keep their promises;* who are kind and free-hearted;

who do not seek any advantage that will cause suffering or loss to others; and then look at the OTHER SORT among you, and you can tell, better than any oracle, what kind of men and women they will prove. Sometimes, from a single action, much of the character can be learned. Hugh Miller, in his life of himself, gives the following anecdote of the childhood of his father: "Rather more than eighty years ago," he says, "a stout little boy was sent from a farm-house, in the parish of Cromarty, to drown a litter of puppies in the adjacent pond. The commission seemed to be not in the least congenial. He sat down beside the pond, and began to cry over his charge, and finally, after wasting some time in a paroxysm of indecision and sorrow, instead of committing the puppies to the water, he tucked them up in his kilt, and set out on a blind pathway, which went winding through the stunted heath of the dreary Moulbay Common, in a direction opposite to that of the farm-house. After some doubtful wandering on the waste, he succeeded in reach-

ing, before nightfall, the neighboring sea-port town, and presented himself, laden with his charge, at his mother's door. The poor woman, a sailor's widow, in very humble circumstances, raised her hands in astonishment: 'Ah! my unlucky boy,' she exclaimed, 'what's this? What brings you here?'

"'The little doggies, mother,' said the boy; 'I could na drown the doggies, and I took them to you.'" This tender-hearted little boy, when he grew up, and became the master of a sailing vessel as he did, was sure to prove the kind and loved master that he was.

You have all heard of Benedict Arnold; you know he was the only man that proved a traitor to his country in the war of the Revolution. The boy was as false as the man. "One of his earliest amusements," says his biographer, "was the robbing of birds'-nests in sight of the old ones, that he might be diverted by their cries." He was apprenticed to some worthy druggists. "Near their shop was a schoolhouse, and he would scatter in the paths broken pieces of

glass taken from the crates, by which the children would cut their feet in coming from the school. The cracked and imperfect vials which came in the crates were perquisites of the apprentices. Hopkins, a fellow-apprentice, and an amiable youth, was in the habit of placing his share on the outside of the shop, near the door, and permitting the small boys to take them away, who were pleased with this token of his good-will. Arnold followed the same practice; but when he had decoyed the boys, and they were busy picking up the broken vials, he would rush out of the shop with a horsewhip in his hand, call them thieves, and beat them without mercy." "Even a child is known by his doings."

"Arnold was likewise fond of rash feats of daring, always foremost in danger, and as fearless as he was wickedly mischievous. Sometimes he took corn to a grist-mill in the neighborhood; and, while waiting for the meal, he would amuse himself and astonish his playmates by clinging to the arms of a large water-wheel,

and passing with it beneath and above the water." In this he manifested, while yet a boy, the intrepidity that, when he became a man and a soldier, won for him the admiration of his countrymen and the confidence of General Washington. But the evil qualities that were betrayed in robbing birds'-nests and strewing glass under the poor little boys' feet eclipsed all his brave deeds.

Some memories of your friend Joseph Curtis, which have been preserved in his family, will show you how like the boy was to the man, ever ready to do kindness and to explore the paths of knowledge. "Joseph," says one of his relatives, now in the decline of life, "was never known to quarrel, or strike a brother or sister. At school he took the part of the weakest. If he saw one boy domineering over another, he stood by the oppressed. The little boys all looked to Joseph as their champion." In those days it was the custom, as it still is in some rural districts, for the children to carry their dinners to school, and to eat it at noon

during the hour's interval. If there were any poor little fellow for whom no portion was provided, Joseph shared with him 'the fat and the sweet' — the bread and butter, cold sausage, nut-cakes, apples, and nuts, that formed the relishing schoolboys' lunch of those (anti-dyspèpsia) days. If, by dividing, he could not satisfy 'the poor boys,' he gave them all, and deferred his appetite to his supper, when he was sure to be fed, and they were not.

On one cold winter day—and cold winter days are bitter in New England—Joseph came home without his mittens. His fingers were stiffened, and he was rebuked for losing his mittens. He said nothing in self-defense till farther reproof made him confess that he had given them to one of the little poor boys.

A proof of the tenderness of his heart and of his *consideration* (a rare virtue with young people) was long gratefully remembered and recounted by a poor woman of Danbury, some ten years Joseph's senior. She was afflicted with paroxysms of insanity, and at those times

she wandered about the village with an impression that she was pursued and persecuted. At other times "Uncle Reuben's" was her house of refuge, from a feeling (as she said when she recovered her reason) that if she could find Joseph, "he would protect and comfort her," and so he did. "He would," she said, "say to me, 'Now, aunt, I know you want something,' and he would leave his play, and give me some refreshment, and coax me home; and when the boys beset me, he would make them fly."

There was a noted old drinking loafer in Danbury, who went from house to house asking for a mug of cider, a rustic hospitality rarely refused in those days of abounding cider-presses. But Joseph Curtis, even in his boyhood, was too thoughtful in his kindness to minister to destructive appetites; and one day, when this fellow called at Uncle Reuben's, Joseph filled the mug from the brine in the beef-barrel. The old man eagerly put it to his lips and swallowed a heavy draught, and then, without speaking, set the mug quietly down

and left the house, and did not return to it for many months.

Joseph Curtis very early manifested that authority over inferior spirits in man or beast that seems to be a divine inspiration. His Danbury cotemporaries remember that when he was but eight years old he astonished them with his courage in mounting young horses and his prowess in riding them. While he was yet a boy, he was renowned for his skill in breaking horses. "He had," they said, "the knack of it"—a knack partly explained by his "seldom using the whip, and never abusively." In addition to his gentleness, he had patience and perseverance—qualities that horses comprehend almost as well as men. Nearly sixty years of city life did not inure him to the abuse of horses. He often interfered to save them from what he termed "infuriated ignorance."

Some boys will play at marbles through their childhood without thinking how they are made or what they consist of. When Joseph was about *four* years old, a marble was given to

him. It was the first he had ever seen. He admired its smoothness and roundness, but how came it so? He was told it was made of sand. He was not satisfied. The marble was hard, he thought, and how could it be made of sand? He went to bed pondering on the unexplained mystery. He dreamed it was a star dropped from the sky, and he awoke still wondering what it might prove. As soon as he was dressed, he made a rush to the wood-pile, and with a hatchet broke it open, and, poor little fellow, was as disappointed as the boy who broke open his drum to find the sound. He was fond of telling this story, for he traced to this point of his life his first ideas of mechanics. Our young friends will permit us to remark to them that this observation which Joseph Curtis showed in relation to the marble makes a vast deal of the difference in the intelligence of men. One goes blind and blundering through life, knocking his head against this object and stumbling against that, and dies as ignorant of their nature and uses as do the lower animals. Such

men as the famous Hugh Miller and Joseph Curtis find every where schools and teachers. They learn a lesson from a marble, and the art of charity in a village school; and they go on learning to the last, and leave the world prepared to commune with higher intelligences—to join a higher class.

We have now specified the facts that contrast Joseph Curtis's childhood with Benedict Arnold's, and proceed to a more regular course of narrative. Joseph Curtis was born in Newtown, Connecticut, September 19th, 1782—a day to be set down in the heart's calendar, and kept as a fête-day by all who, like the good vicar, love happy human faces, and love more those who make them so. Joseph was the fourth of seventeen children born to his father Reuben, fourteen of whom survived to maturity. Doubtless there were differences and childish dissensions among these seventeen children, for they were young mortals, and not angels; but one

of the sisters, still surviving, says, "in our humble country home we lived lovingly and quietly."

Reuben was an honest, industrious, sagacious man, who looked sharply before and around him, as need was with seventeen children to provide for. He was commonly called "Uncle Reuben." "Uncle," gratuitously prefixed, designates, in a rural neighborhood, a kind-hearted man, a man ready to speak a word of cheer, or give a lift to one in need. Not all his seventeen children could use up his great store of affection.

Uncle Reuben seems not to have been satisfied within the prescribed and narrow bounds of the prevailing sect in Connecticut, so he stepped over into the fields of a people called Sandimanians. We believe their religious creed did not materially differ from their neighbors', but they in practice held to one article, "thrift—thrift," from which our Sandimanian friends varied widely. Uncle Reuben's people held it wrong to accumulate property. His seventeen

children must have made it very easy to him to maintain this article, and perhaps the sincere adoption of it in his youth may in part explain the singular zeal with which Joseph imparted to others all that he had to spare from his necessity throughout his whole life. Another article of the Sandimanian Creed was an implicit submission to the powers that be: so, though "Uncle Reuben's" heart may have beaten for his country as truly as the best of his patriotic neighbors, he remained quietly at home when, in the Revolutionary struggle, they took up arms against King George. Honest men differ. Uncle Reuben's inactivity in this great cause proceeded from no pretext—from no want of *pluck*, for his memory is loved and respected as none but a man's, good and true, is. The best *pluck* is to adhere to one's principles through good and evil report. "Be sure you're right, *then* go ahead."

Men's characters are, for the most part, moulded by the society in which their childhood and youth is passed. In Connecticut, in Joseph

Curtis's early days, there were few rich and fewer poor; theirs was a nearly equal condition of reciprocal intercourse and mutual consideration — "a pure republic," as their own best poet says, and most happily and truly he describes them. They

"Would shake hands with a king upon his throne,
And think it kindness to his majesty:
A stubborn race, fearing and flattering none."

And then, relenting from his delicate satire, he portrays their more attractive features affectionately, and as truly too:

"View them near,
At home, where all their worth and pride is placed,
And there their hospitable fires burn bright,
And there the lowliest farm-house hearth is graced
With manly hearts, in piety sincere.
Faithful in love, in honor stern and chaste,
In friendship warm and true, in danger brave,
Beloved in life, and sainted in the grave."*

It was among these people that Joseph Curtis grew up, profiting by all the advantages of this fortunate social condition.

* Halleck.

That capital autobiography to which we have already referred is written by Hugh Miller, and entitled "My Schools and Schoolmasters." His "schools" were the great universal schools of nature, open to all; his "schoolmasters" the good and intelligent men and women he met with in the daily walks of life. He began a poor man. He had little of what is technically termed education. He was by trade a stone-mason, and worked diligently; and yet, by the habits of quick and acute observation and inquiry, by always *keeping his eyes and ears open*, by beginning with asking, whenever his foot turned up a stone, as Joseph Curtis did of the marble, "what is it made of?" he became one of the greatest geologists of Europe. Joseph Curtis studied in the same school that formed this great scholar. Observation and experience were his teachers. The "common schools" of his day were but indifferent, and Mr. Curtis regretted all his life the want of that instruction which every pupil in our public schools now has. And, one of the seventeen,

he could not long have the advantage of schooling, poor as it was. This multitudinous family must each scramble for himself and all, and at the age of fourteen Joseph entered a printing-office. This place was offered to him by the editor of the village paper, who had been struck by his intelligence, and impressed by his character.

A printing-office is a "school" to a boy with open eyes and ears. Our great Franklin (Joseph Curtis may have been incited by his example) began his career by working as a printer's boy, and ended it by "sitting down with princes in kings' houses," and by being more honored than the best of them. If any of our young readers do not know why, we advise them to read the life of Franklin, which perhaps will entertain them as much and instruct them more than the life of their favorite hero, Robinson Crusoe.

Steady confinement to the printer's office damaged Joseph's health. He was directed by the family physician to seek an out-of-door em-

ployment, and he engaged as driver of a stage-coach from Danbury to Kent. In those days there were few persons of foreign birth in New England. "Every body knew every body." Life was carried on with extreme simplicity. No employment was menial, certainly none held in contempt; but the employment of driving a coach over the rugged roads of those times, through summer heats and the fearful cold of winter, required almost as much intrepidity as an arctic expedition, with all appliances and means to boot, now does, and discretion and humanity as well as intrepidity.

We have the relation of a rough-weather experience in Joseph's coach from an old lady, a cotemporary of his, which proves that the driving of a coach then was no holiday affair. This old lady was then a young mother, traveling with "two babes," as she terms them, under Joseph's conduct from Danbury to Kent. "It was night, and very dark and very cold; and in a dreadful part of the road the coach upset." The poor young mother was in an agony of

fright for her "babes." She thinks "she should have died" but for the care of the young coachman. He took off his coat and wrapped the baby in it. There was one old lady-passenger in the coach, not in the least hurt by the overturn, but scared out of her wits and her temper, and she began, as our relator says, "storming away," pouring out her wrath on the head of the devoted Joseph. He took it all calmly and gently, and only replied, "I'll carry you all through safe, ma'am, if it be on my back." "And so," says our informer, "he took both my babes in his arms, turning horse for our sakes." It was two miles to their destined inn. He went cheerily on with his weak and faint-hearted party, singing songs and telling stories by turns, soothing the "babes," sustaining the young mother, and coaxing and cheering on the grumbling old lady till she was beguiled out of her ill-humor, and they all arrived in good heart at the inn.

But there, when the noble lad laid down his burden, he fainted, and they saw the blood

trickling from a severe cut in his forehead, which he had not even mentioned. As soon as he was restored to consciousness and his head bound up, faithful to his trust, "he started off," says our narrator, "as though nothing had happened, and back he went two miles after his horses and his broken coach, and brought them safely to the inn."

Here were manifested heroic qualities such as have made renowned names; but our friend was destined to a noiseless life—to a place among the "village Hampdens," the "mute, inglorious Miltons."

We are not informed how Joseph's time was employed from sixteen to eighteen, but we may fairly infer from what went before and came after that it was not misspent or wasted. Such harvests as his can only be reaped in ground well prepared.

CHAPTER II.

CLERKSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

"The country wins me still.
I never framed a wish or formed a plan
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss
But there I laid the scene."

THAT is one of the most momentous epochs in a young man's life when he decides on his occupation and his place of residence. The ordinary preference in our country is of city life and mercantile pursuits.

A boy goes forth from his pleasant country home, from the watch and safe-conduct of his father, goes beyond the sweet sound of "mother," the companionship of brothers, and sisters, and schoolmates, from the home where every familiar thing is dear to him—the grass-plot, the garden, the old oaken bucket, the hens around the barn door, the old cows he has daily

driven to pasture, the dog that looks wistfully after him, even the old cat that sits purring on the old gate-post. He gives them all a lingering, parting look, dashes off his tears, and soon opens his eyes wide upon a new life. He gets a place in a great dry-goods shop, and passes his days there. He goes to a cheap, decent lodging-house for his meals and bed, but there nobody cares for him, no one knows him or his "folks" at home, or any of the people of his own village that have hitherto made up his world; there is nothing to answer to the wants of his mind and heart, and so his mind and heart are starved out. He goes to church on Sundays because he knows "that will please mother," but he has no interest there; the minister is a stranger, the congregation are all strangers to him, and his thoughts wander off to the "old meeting-house," to the dear familiar objects there, and to the lads and lasses that met him at its door with their pleasant greetings.

He has a right in the Mercantile Library, but

he has no time to use it. By degrees he gets weaned from the old home. He grows sharp at selling, and contentedly spends his days in puffing up and getting off his master's goods. He is proud to have talent for trade. He is valued by his employer. He abstains from all improper places of amusement. He compares his prosperous condition with great satisfaction to other country lads, who have been led off by the temptations of the city into bad courses, and have disappeared, some by an untimely death, some, perhaps, are living by hook and by crook, and some, alas! are finishing a term of service at—Sing Sing. But our boy has kept his eye on the main chance, and, after years of selling gloves, and measuring silks and laces, he has got a flourishing business of his own. Trade is carried on by credit in our country, and the enterprise and trading ability of our poor country lad have proved as good as money capital to him. He marries well—as the world goes. Every year adds to his wealth and his mercantile reputation. His name is

"*good*" in Wall Street. His name is among the first in all mercantile enterprises. He buys a grand house, with the modern improvements, in a fashionable quarter. He has his carriage and horses. He has gained his prize. From his proud eminence he looks back upon his country home through the wrong end of the telescope. How shrunken, and small, and contemptible it appears!

But alas! he has passed the meridian of his life. The days of vigor, of buoyant hope, of happy, hard work, are ended. Look in his face, and you will see wrinkles where dimples were. The plowshare of care has cut furrows on his brow, and his sallow, sunken cheeks show that the baleful shadow of dyspepsia is settled on him.

And *now*, at the crowning point of his labors, comes a change—a *crisis!* The pillars of his house fall; and, wearied and heart-sick, with a family to whom luxuries have become necessaries, he has to begin a struggle for bread. And *now* he looks back at his country-home through the right end of the telescope.

How many at this moment—November, 1857—who, a few months, a few weeks since were reckoned among our richest citizens, are, since "the *panic*"—the crisis and its reverses—sighing for the security and peace of a modest country home.

"Seeing is believing," and we can not expect the young who have not seen to believe, but surely we may look to the parent—to the wise, conscientious parent—to correct this over-pressure to the city, to temper this haste to be rich. It is his business to train his son to a love of the country, to a right estimate of the superior stability and dignity of agricultural pursuits over the exciting and precarious race of mercantile life. We glory in the go-ahead spirit of our country, but we beg our young friends to heed the counsel of that renowned old pioneer who said, "Be *sure* you're right, *then* go ahead."

There is a contrary migration which seems to us far safer, better, nobler, than that which we have described, the exchange of our over-

crowded city life to a home in those broad, glorious reserves in the West, where a lad is removed from the peril of bad associates, and from the harassment of uncertain employment; where competence is insured to health and industry; where health and industry, indeed, are better than money; and where, in devoting himself to the happiest industry appointed to man, the tilling of the earth, he secures the "glorious privilege" of independence, and the more glorious privilege of succoring weaker and less-favored wayfarers in life than himself.

We have digressed to make some suggestions in conformity to the wish we have often heard Mr. Curtis express that our lads would go from their excellent city schools to the West, whither their star points them. Our readers will pardon us.

In 1800, Joseph Curtis, then being eighteen years old, went to New York, and entered as clerk William Underhill's hardware store in Pearl Street.

We do not know whether the city was Mr.

Curtis's deliberate choice, or whether he was borne there by the current that sets that way. Most of the young men of those country parts of New England that have their business relations with New York go to that city. They are from their childhood (we are sorry to say it) imbued with the idea that to acquire property is the main business of life, and for this purpose New York is the great mart—the place, above all others, where one can make haste to be rich. Few are the young men who can resist its varied enterprises and eager competitions, the aspect of its forest of ship-masts, its commerce to every part of the known world, its gigantic steam-works, its dazzling display of the manufactures and products of all parts of our globe, its superior conveniences and facilities in the arts of life, its varied amusements and enchanting gayeties.

None of these things moved our humble young friend. He came from his Spartan home with moderate desires, and with the purpose of working honestly and faithfully for

those he had left behind him. The kind, honest Danbury lad was not changed by coming to the city. For his first year's services at William Underhill's he was to receive one hundred and fifty dollars and his board. Of this small sum he gave his mother sixty dollars, and with the remainder paid for his clothes and all his incidental expenses. We respect money when we see what it can produce in the hands of one who is both generous and self-denying. Underhill acknowledged the worth of his clerk, and the second year advanced his salary to three hundred dollars. Of course Mr. Curtis enlarged his benefactions, and (very unlike most young men) diminished his personal expenses; for, in addition to his allowance to his mother, he supported two sisters at school. We know a college lad who spends sixty dollars per annum for boots. The boots may be made by the best French artist in boots, and our young gentleman's feet may look as well as Apollo's would in boots, but at the end of the year the boots are but old, ill-smell-

ing leather; and what has been the product of Joseph Curtis's filial gift of sixty dollars? It has comforted, and recompensed, and cheered his mother, and sent up, like Abel's sacrifice, a sweet incense to heaven; and it has left with him a precious memory to be pleasant company through life. There's a difference in outlays.

Joseph Curtis's faithful service won the entire confidence and approbation of his employer. But the lad's heart was not of the nature of hardware, and it melted in the glance of a pretty, fair-skinned Quaker girl from Hempstead Harbor, Long Island. She was on a visit to her sister, one of William Underhill's neighbors. Fifty years ago in New York neighbor meant at least acquaintance. Her modest garb (a plain setting suits a precious gem) attracted Joseph's eye, and in her old age the dear old lady confesses that the manly beauty of the young clerk first attracted her, but that nobler part which his goodly features indicated fixed her heart. Her sister said to her, "Dol-

ly, if thee can get that young man thee will get a treasure." Joseph Curtis was as honest in his courtship as in all the subordinate affairs of life. He told Dorothy that he was poor, that his father was poor, and that he was one of fourteen living children, and must share his earnings with them. The fair Quaker was not disheartened by this statement; she knew the worth of the treasure she had won, and they were married in 1803, one month before he came to his majority. Then his clerkship ended, and he was received into partnership with his employer.

"How many times," says one of his eldest nieces, "when only eight years old, have I listened to my parents' comments on the trust and respect shown to my Uncle Joseph by Billy Underhill, and, when much older, I have looked with admiration on bright cutlery and other hardware articles he gave my uncle when he was married as a testimonial of his esteem and honor." These articles, kept bright by the neat-handed Quaker wife, adorned the house

which was furnished by Stephen Hopkins, her father. "We had little," she says in her pleasant retrospections of that period of her life, "but we never wanted." If to want means to desire, we doubt if many of our richest householders can make this boast of our friend; and if to have no desire beyond our possession is riches, then who is richest, the lady who weeps because her husband will not buy her a fifth camel's-hair shawl, or our frugal Quaker housewife, content with her bright cutlery?

The younger partner seems to have had but a small portion of the profits of the concern. For the first six months he received but four hundred dollars; but with such appliances as taking a lodger and frugal housewifery, he continued his benefactions, and lived without incurring debts, "*wanting nothing.*"

CHAPTER III.

HOME LIFE.

"In the house of the righteous is much treasure."

In 1804 Joseph Curtis removed to 92 Maiden Lane. There his family occupied a part of the house, and there he began the hardware business on his own account. There was no romance in his humble pursuits and domestic life. It was a serene course of love and duty. He continued to live and thrive there for fifteen years. There occurred the greatest epoch in a parent's life—the birth of a first son. Old Jacob, in blessing his twelve sons, said to Reuben, "Thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." There is something of this exultant spirit in every parent; and if, like Mr. Curtis, he is a man of thoughtful and religious turn, he recognizes in

his first-born the first possession endowed with immortality. The boy was bright and promising, and seemed to authorize the illimitable hopes he inspired; but when only three years old he was transferred to a higher school by a short but severe process. By a sad accident he was severely scalded. His father suffered no hand but his to dress his wounds, and no doubt the skill of that tender hand availed to lessen the child's sufferings. He made no complaint, but to all his inquiries replied, "Better, dear father." And when he saw the boy's eyes closing on this world, he said, "Are you going to sleep?" "Yes," he murmured; and fell into that sleep which God giveth his beloved.

Surviving children grow up—grow into the cares and usages of life. They form new relations. The current of their lives runs downward. That which is taken away in the fresh, endearing loveliness of childhood remains unchanged in the parent's imagination. The magical sound of the little footsteps is still in his home; the musical tones of the young voice

still ring there. There he remains, always the playful, loving child, an ever-present beauty and blessing. So was Mr. Curtis's little boy, and to the end of his life he fondly recurred to him.

At the very hour of his boy's departure his eldest daughter was born, but so deep was he in sorrow at the moment that long after he confessed to her that he was not conscious of one throb of joy, and dreamed as little of the light that event was to shed on his life as a traveler in the depths of a cavern knows of the gladness of the rising sun.

Mr. Curtis had six children born during his residence at 92 Maiden Lane, and twice the angel of death visited and consecrated the same apartment made glad by the beginning of their lives.

We have few records of the fifteen years of his Maiden Lane life. They flowed on obscure in man's eyes, but sending up a memorial, like Cornelius's, of alms and good deeds. His daughter remembers that he had the custom of

assembling in the evening young men, probably apprentices and clerks, for study and mutual instruction. "If I have a vocation, it is teaching," he often said; and faithfully, from the beginning to the end of life, did he recognize this vocation.

There was a beautiful union and mutual confidence between Mr. Curtis and his sisters. They seem to have recognized the relation as one of the nearest and dearest, and to have cherished it with a holy regard to its immortal nature.

"I well remember," says one of them, who was at the time a very young observer, "his beautiful example of reverence to his parents: how he received his father on his visits to New York; with what child-like docility he listened to his father's views and opinions; how he honored his every feeling, and strove to make every hour pleasant to him.

"And when sorrow came to his own home, and his business was deranged by foreign wars, and heart and hand were full, he attended to

every call of distress from Danbury (the residence of his numerous relatives), and sent comfort and assistance to my home. In the midst of his business perplexities his father was struck down with apoplexy; he came among us on the wings of love, made arrangements for his mother, and continued to comfort his suffering relatives with words and acts of love. And how tender and delicate was his way of succoring us! After he had parted from us, a load of wood or coal would appear at the door, or a bank-note be found in a book on the table, or a comfort or supply of some necessity. He had an eye to see every suffering, and a heart to supply every want, and this in the midst of his domestic cares and duties."

We have quoted the words of Joseph Curtis's relative as honorable to her as to him, for that gratitude must have been up to fervent heat which continues to flow after the cooling lapse of more than fifty years and the hardening tendencies of prosperity.

His mother became wholly his charge, and

lived thirteen and a half years in his house, always occupying its best room, and attended by his children with filial reverence. "Nothing was too good for her," says one of them: "it seemed to us her queenly right." Seven of his sisters he took, one after another, into his family, and treated them as his children. Several of them were married from his house. He assisted his brothers in their business, assuming the relation of parent to them. He was their endorser. One of his sisters, a widow, he aided to the utmost limit of his ability; and his nephews and nieces have the blessed memory of many a benefaction from this earthly providence of their family—of aid in their education, aid in their business, aid wherever and whenever they needed and he could give. His benefactions were not limited to the fifteen years in Maiden Lane, but diffused through his whole life. "And yet," says one of his family, a faithful observer of his life, and not an exaggerator of his good deeds, "our dear father did no more than was his duty toward his kindred (a noble

view of family duty this!). He never alluded to any act of his for his family as unusual, or calling for self-approval." And Joseph Curtis was never a wealthy man, but a man of small gains—a man of wise counsel and great heart.

Among Joseph Curtis's domestic benefactions, screened from the world's observation in the privacy of his home, was one, not picturesque, not in any way to be idealized, but in its gracious Christian beauty unsurpassed by those brilliant examples of friendship, Castor and Pollux, and the two Quintilians. He had a brother, Judson, who suffered from epileptic attacks, and was rendered imbecile by them. He had some dim rays of intelligence and feeble pulsations of affection that made him conscious of well-being and perceptive of kindness. This brother Mr. Curtis kept for twenty-six years in his own home, assuming the whole burden of his maintenance, and the whole responsibility of his comfortable sensations; for of any nearer approach to happiness than mere sensation he was not capable. The poor man

was as dependent as a little child upon personal care. This care his brother never delegated to another, and never would suffer him to be dependent on a menial for any service whatever, so long as he himself was able to perform it. His dress was scrupulously attended to, and his person cared for as a tender mother cares for her child. The poor invalid was liable to sulkiness—to fits of passion. His gentle brother and his eldest daughter, and they alone, could manage and subdue him. After giving some painful particulars of the labor that this care imposed upon her father, Miss Curtis says, "As Judson grew older he lost the use of his limbs, and for two years prior to his death was confined to a chair on wheels; all this time I never heard my father complain, only look sad, and sigh. Many a time has dear father turned aside, taken a restorative, dropped a tear, and gone to his work untiringly. Eight months before his death we (his children) rebelled. Father was too feeble to lift him, and he resigned him to the kind care of his sister, whose

hand had long been ready to receive him. Daily father saw him, *always* shaved him, and frequently assisted the nurse in changing him. He left us on the first of June, and died the following December. His last words were '*Brother Joseph.*' Father answered, 'My dear, your mother waits for you.' Is there not a most touching scriptural simplicity in this parting? The word '*brother*' comprises the whole capacity of a human being for loving and blessing, and the answer tenderly recognizes the mother waiting to receive the spirit of her child released from the obstruction and burden of its mortal investment.

"He was buried," continues Miss Curtis, "from our house, just three months before father. I can not forget father looking upon him in his coffin. 'He was a harmless man,' he said: 'he has filled his mission, and now, daughter, my work is finished;' and so it proved. My father would not have died so quietly had he left Judson behind him."

It was the only task he grudged to delegate

to another, the only one he seemed to feel assured he could perform better than another.

This keeping to himself this loving duty was the only approach to selfishness (selfishness!) we have heard of in his long life. One of Mr. Curtis's sisters, a lady possessed of ample fortune, affectionately insisted on assuming the charge of this unfortunate brother; but Joseph had done the duty till it had become his happiness, and he could not part with it. Whenever his children or friends would urge him to resign it, he would reply, "I am sure my mother looks down with approbation on my conduct." This was the single instance of an approach to self-commendation.

To estimate this work of love, it must be remembered that it was carried on, without once faltering, through a series of twenty-six years —laborious years, years of unintermitting activity, years whose leisure moments were consecrated to beneficence—that he never let go his fraternal grasp till the burden dropped from his weakened arms in his seventy-fifth year!

In writing of his family life, Miss Curtis says, "I recollect my father always cheerful and happy, and never letting an opportunity whereby we could be improved pass. His habit was to gather us around him and propound questions; for instance, 'Which of you can tell me how glass is made?' 'Where does iron come from?' then followed reading, and at the next early evening we were catechised." Again she says, "My father's family government was perfect. He never struck me, but he has given me sleepless nights by his grieved but commanding eye of displeasure. I recollect deceiving him when I was about seven years old. He spoke decidedly, 'Go up stairs.' In a short time he, with mother, came to me. They sat still, and looked very sorry. I saw a little switch in his hand. I perfectly remember my conclusion, 'If you strike me, I will do it again.' Father read my defiant look. He laid the stick aside. I see the whole scene now. He sighed, and tenderly called me to him. He waited a few moments, and then pictured his very naugh-

ty daughter. 'He would not whip me,' he said; 'I must go to bed; if I were hungry, I could eat, but not with him or mother.' Shall I ever forget that night? He would not hear my concessions, would not kiss me, but long before he was up in the morning I was let into his room and—*forgiven.*

"My sisters, between whom there were two years, when about nine and eleven were petulant to each other. Reproof failed to correct the habit. At last there was an outbreak. The four children, as usual, were summoned to his presence." (It is notable that Mr. Curtis uniformly treated the subjects of his government, whether his own children, his apprentices, or the juvenile delinquents of the Refuge, as peers. He made them virtually the judges of his laws, and the tribunal to which he demonstrated the justice of their execution in detail.) "After a silent meditation, my father said, 'Children, you must part; to-night you sleep together for the last time. I shall send you to separate boarding-schools, and when you again live to-

gether perhaps you will have learned to love one another; until you have learned that lesson, do not expect to return to this home.' There was weeping. We *all* did our part. I was sixteen years old. I knew father was in earnest, and I saw no escape from the sentence. He kissed me and my brother" (not the offenders). "He then bade the girls to go to bed. There was but one thing before them—to *obey*. As I always put them to bed, I, as usual, started to go with them. 'Go,' said my father, 'but do not speak to them.' Poor girls, how they cried! I saw them in bed, and kissed them. E—— said, 'Ask father to come;' he did not, but walked the hall. After a while they slept, locked in each other's arms. Before daylight E—— was at his door. 'Father, may we come in?' 'Yes,' spoken as always, kindly. 'Well, children?' 'Father, won't you kiss us?' 'Yes, after you have kissed each other.' They then said, 'Oh, father, do not send us away.' Their punishment was commuted. They were not sent away; but, though permitted to remain at

home, they were not permitted to speak or play together till they could do both with uninterrupted love.

"This state of things," says their sister, "did not long exist. To this hour the lesson has not been forgotten. They never since have spoken unkindly to each other. They have differed, but without anger."

Joseph Curtis, as one might expect from his general orderliness, was as stanch a lover of punctuality as that good man who held it in his scale of virtues next to godliness. When one of his daughters was about fifteen, she fell into the besetting sin of young ladies, of precious few of whom it can be said, "Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily."

The delinquent was reproved by her father, but went on transgressing. One morning, without preface or comment, he said, "My daughter, go to bed to-night at half past eight:" this was in the month of June. The penalty was not effective. The young lady was behind time the next morning, and received no other

reproof than "Go to bed, my daughter, this evening at half after seven." And so the bright June afternoons, so joyous to a happy girl, were curtailed till the embryo fine lady was reformed altogether, and took her seat beside her father at his exact time.

These may seem small particulars, but they will serve to show how the preserving habits and virtues of home life were formed and taught by this wise and patient parent.

One of Mr. Curtis's relatives writes with a touching earnestness of the annual family assemblages at this favorite uncle's (this "dear uncle Joseph's" house) for twenty-one consecutive years. "How serene and joyful was his face as he took his seat in the large arm-chair, and called around him the young people (his own children, and the sons and daughters of his thirteen brothers and sisters) who had shared the bountiful feast he had provided for them! How gentle and loving he was to all! I believe there are few wranglers for high honors at our universities and colleges that feel greater

satisfaction in success than did our little ones. Each produced the gift-book given by 'Uncle Joseph' at the preceding New Year holiday. Those who had read and well-used their books joyfully answered his call. If an admonition were needed, how kind it was! how impressive his reproof! how many of his lessons have made impressions never to be effaced! It seems to me that he omitted no opportunity." We have inserted at length this testimony of an eye-witness: it is better than an elaborate encomium. It proves that Joseph Curtis, in his philanthropic career, did not overlook the duty nearest to him. His beneficence radiated from the central point, home. He had a strong feeling for the claims of blood, and so Christianly modest was he in his benefactions to his family that some of them are ignorant to this day that the help came from "Uncle Joseph."

It may be asked how, with his moderate means, he was able to do all this. How, with a growing family to support, sustained, in comfort and respectability, frugally, but never stint-

ed, he was able so liberally to impart to others. We answer that he was diligent in business; that he did thoroughly whatever he undertook to do; that he had a judicious econony; that he was strictly temperate, and abstemious in personal expenses; and, finally, that through all his life he held to one tenet of his good old father —the Sandimanian's Creed—and never suffered property to accumulate. His practical faith was,

"Savings are but thrown away.
Hoarded manna,
Moths and worms shall on it prey."

He left nothing at the risk of financial "*panics.*" All was safely invested according to the good old rule, "that which is given is saved." His example is open to all who neither aim at riches or fear poverty; and let it be remembered that riches and poverty are, for the most part, mere fancy terms.

"For he that needs five thousand pounds to live,
Is full as poor as he that needs but five."

Mr. Curtis was a very capable man of business, and he went on successfully till the war

of 1812 and the famous Milan decrees of Napoleon, which so embarrassed the business world and ruined thousands, extended their baleful influence to his humble industry; and though he manfully sustained himself till 1817, he then failed, and surrendered every thing—his household furniture even—to his creditors. They bore a well-deserved testimony to his integrity and worth by refusing to accept it.

"My impressions of those troubled days," writes Miss Curtis, "are most vivid. I was ten years old, the eldest of four, when he assigned his every dollar. It proved insufficient to satisfy one of his creditors. In those days we had a debtor's jail, and given city limits. To the latter he was consigned. I never shall forget the hour he left us. I never had seen him weep before. He kissed us, and when the door closed upon us, child as I was, my heart knew its first sorrow; but once since have I known the same utterly abandoned loneliness."

The allusion is to the last saddest hour in family life, when the parent is borne away to his final rest.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MANUMISSION SOCIETY.

A CITY is a great field for philanthropic labor. When Joseph Curtis began his career in New York, the city did not contain 100,000 inhabitants, and it was comparatively in a healthy moral state. Philanthropy was not then the necessity, nor, we may say, the fashion that it now is. The country was then young, and generous spirits found channels for action in moulding its fresh political institutions.

Dr. Bellows, in his funeral sermon for Mr. Curtis, to which we are largely indebted for the material of our little volume, says, "We must remember that fifty years ago the ignorant, the weak, and abandoned, the slave, the prisoner, the deaf and dumb, the blind, had not drawn to themselves the attention even of the Christian; and when we are estimating the

claims on our gratitude of the founders of our public schools, the projectors of asylums and houses of refuge, the starters of emancipation, we are not to forget that the lamp of their charity sprung up in utter darkness, and was trimmed without the notice of men, and fed by none of the sympathy and admiration of society at large."

It is rather startling to remember that as lately as 1811 it was necessary to institute a "Manumission Society" in our now free State of New York, and this fact may make us a little more compassionate to our brothers of the South, whose escutcheon still bears the blot of this dreadful *institution*. And not only was slavery then, in some measured and diminishing form, tolerated in our state, but hard men here, as they do elsewhere, took advantage of it, and "a large number of slaves in the state, and especially in the city, entitled to their freedom by existing laws, were still held in slavery by crafty masters."

The "Manumission Society" was established

to right the wrongs of those thus dishonestly held in bondage, and, farther, to provide for the utter extinction of slavery in the state. Joseph Curtis became a member of this society in 1811. It is very common for men to join philanthropic enterprises from a sudden impulse or flare-up of feeling, and idle men and women, having nothing else to do, follow this fashion of the day, and some, it is possible, from the mere vain love of seeing their names in the newspapers in good company. But we may be sure Joseph Curtis was of none of these. "Deeds, not words," was the motto of his life. He was every where a diligent head and heart worker. He joined the Manumission Society in 1811, and was associated in the standing committee with men still held in grateful remembrance as public benefactors—Peter A. Jay, Cadwallader Colden, Isaac M. Ely, and others. "There were some hundreds of cases of trial occurring every year between slaves claiming and masters denying their right to freedom, and nearly every one of these was looked after

and the slaves' rights vindicated by Joseph Curtis." For eight years he worked in this holy cause. This was not the work of an idle man who is trying to fill up vacant hours, or even conscientiously employing leisure time, but it might be strictly called "over-work"—work over and above that done every day to supply the necessities of his family—work only to be remunerated when to every man shall be rendered according to his work.

But, though not paid in any sordid sense, his labors were gratefully recognized. After spending three winters in Albany as an outside attendant on the sittings of the Legislature there, his labors and those of his coadjutors were successful, and in the session of 1817 an act of universal emancipation was passed. To signalize his great part in that honorable occasion, and when such gifts were not prostituted, as they now are, to noisy politicians and accidental successes, a pair of silver pitchers was presented to him. Each of them bears a vignette representing Mr. Curtis as the slave's champion, hold-

ing in one hand a mirror, which reflects the light upon two slaves whose manacles the Goddess of Liberty is loosing, while with the other he points to a black school-child pondering over his school-book. The design was in the earliest infancy of art in our New World, and certainly is not artistical, but its meaning is "plain and precious." The inscription is simply,

Manumission Society of New York
to
Joseph Curtis.
Act 31. March, 1817.

There was a completeness in all Joseph Curtis's labors. He did not drop his interest in the cause of the colored people when he obtained the manumission act. He took part in the institution of schools for their children, frequently visited them, and, in particular, one at Flatbush. This he attended every Sunday. "He left home," says Miss Curtis, "at half past four in the morning, walked to Flatbush, a distance of six miles, taught all day, and returned at evening."

Mr. Curtis regarded his final success in this mission of mercy as one of the happiest events of his life, and he sometimes referred to the 17th of February, 1817, when he froze his face in mounting the bleak hill to the Capitol at Albany as one of the proudest days of his life. "I feel I have not lived quite in vain," he said, "when I consider the passage of the Manumission Act." He had a moral alembic of his own, by which his own happiness was evolved from that he procured for others. Not many days before his death, but while he was yet in his usual health, a friend, in talking with him, referred to his part in the passage of the Manumission Act. "The memory of it," he said, "will smooth my very dying pillow." "Truly it is what we ha' dune for others, and not what we ha' dune for oursel', that we think on maist pleasantly in that hour."

In considering this portion of his beneficent labors, Dr. Bellows, in his funeral sermon, said, "Mr. Curtis was so strenuous a believer in the sacredness of law, that his anti-slavery sympa-

thies never went along with the Abolitionists; but in all that could be done under, or with the consent of law, no man exceeded him in anti-slavery feeling and zeal."

CHAPTER V.

THE HOUSE OF REFUGE.

"I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me."

A MAN of Joseph Curtis's capabilities could not long remain out of business. In 1820 he became chief superintendent and financier for James P. Allaire, who was at that time embarrassed for want of means to prosecute his great enterprise. Mr. Curtis had no money to offer his friend; but integrity, character, in a business community, is virtually money. By these, Mr. Curtis had such influence with the directors of the Franklin Bank that he obtained aid from that institution for Mr. Allaire, and he began his brilliant career of prosperity, which went on, while his friend, before long, obedient to his high calling, turned aside to succor the wretched and instruct the ignorant.

"Man may not stay; there is no rest
On earth for the good man's foot.
He should go forth on errands bless'd,
And toil for unearthly fruit."

It has already been said that Mr. Curtis regarded teaching, in some of the varied forms of the schoolmaster, as his vocation—his mission. Children were the special objects of his solicitude. In them he recognized a hope for the future of his country.

The condition of the children in our city who are born of vicious, or ignorant and negligent parents, and of such as are left to the casualties of orphanage, was an anxious concern to him. He felt the injustice of society in leaving these wretched, helpless little creatures without training or notice of any sort, and then, for inevitable vices or petty crimes, condemning them to prison, and to the corrupting society of such as were hardened by long experience of crime. He had a gift to discern God's image, obscured as it might be by rags and dirt, and all the miserable habits of vagrancy. When, in his walks

about the wharves and in the ship-yards, he met a gang of rowdy boys with ragged clothes and unwashed faces, he paused to observe them at "marbles," "pitch-pennies," or some rougher game. He soon became interested in the gleams of intelligence that appeared in one boy's superior skill over another. Disputes would arise; oaths and blows follow; then came the moment for Mr. Curtis to interpose; and when he saw the most audacious boy mollified by his gentle voice and calm reproof, and saw eyes brimming with tears upturned to him (for he who, when a boy himself, had mastered wild horses, could, with like gentleness, subdue these little outlaws), and watched the latent spark of love at the bottom of their hearts rekindling by the breath of his love, and the smiles coming, and the lingering look after him as he turned from them, he said, "These boys might be saved." And when he met poor little brawlers in the street, or young things, bare-headed and bare-footed, dodging into areas with the empty alms-baskets, and

mouths full of lies, put into their lips instead of morning prayers, he would say, still seeing in their young faces traces of the hand that made them, "They ought to be saved."

And finally, when he saw children—mere children—in the police courts condemned to prison for petty pilfering, and to contact with men steeped in crimes, horrible schoolmasters in iniquity, his heart cried out, "They must be saved."

And so arose the "House of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents," and under Joseph Curtis's fatherly discipline we have the best testimony that many were saved.

After revolving the project of this institution for a year in his busy head and busier heart, he first communicated it to John Pintard, Jr. We know nothing of Mr. Pintard, but we could envy the man selected by Mr. Curtis to whom first to confide this novel plan of beneficence, sure to be carped at by the "doubtful and unbelieving." Happily, there was at the time an association of patriotic and

enlightened men bound together for the suppression of crime and pauperism. These gentlemen, fifteen in number, met during the winter of 1815–16 at Mr. Curtis's, and there thoroughly and patiently investigated the sources of crime and poverty in our city, and finally, as the best result of their labors, carried out Mr. Curtis's project, and established the House of Refuge. "This was the very beginning of an effort to substitute kindness, care, and good influence for punishment in the discipline of juvenile offenders—the commencement of a system of preventive measures in the treatment of the exposed and criminal classes."* Mr. Curtis's thorough acquaintance with the subject, his zeal and love, pointed him out as the best person to fill the office of superintendent. He was accordingly appointed, and he accepted it. The imperfect working, or failure of most kindred enterprises, is owing to the want of some essential qualification in their principal officers. We do not expect a painter, a sculptor, or a poet to

* Dr. Bellows's Sermon.

succeed unless he has a talent for his art, or that strong bias for it which ends in talent; and yet men are appointed to the most delicate and difficult of all arts, the developing and training, and even the curing of a human soul, who can not "sound its lowest note," or govern "one of its ventages." Mr. Curtis had a divine commission in his own nature for his great work. As Michael Angelo is said to have discerned in the rough block of marble the figure he was to shape out of it, so this heaven-instructed artist saw in the rude, defaced human subject the elements that could be worked to excellence and beauty; and he went bravely to his great task. How he labored in his *studio*, and how he succeeded, will be satisfactorily shown by two letters which have been generously placed at our disposal.

It will appear by these letters, as well as in a document written by Mr. Curtis himself, that, as in his subsequent government of his apprentices, order was the first law of this institution; that unswerving justice was maintained, and

that the same spirit of love that regulated the apprentices redeemed the young convicts. There was much more to be done for the juvenile offenders than for the apprentices. The work was more complicated. They had not only to be taught—they were to be unlearned; but, coming for the first time in their lives under the law of love, they were more susceptible, and more generous in their responses to it. Love was Mr. Curtis's key-note, and the effect he produced with it would remind one (who has ever seen the experiment) of the regular and beautiful forms into which grains of sand, in a chaotic state, are transposed by a single note of music.

Our first testimonial is a letter addressed to Miss Curtis from a man who had no education before he went to the "House of Refuge," and who has since had no opportunity of supplying this want, having spent his early life, after he left the "Refuge," in trading voyages to foreign parts, but who now, placed in an employment of trust by one of our first, most loved,

and most honored citizens, has given and is giving to his seven children the education of which he knows the worth by the want of it. In reply to an inquiry from the writer of this memoir as to the disposition of his letter, he thus nobly volunteers his willingness to publish it. "I am not only willing," he says, "but glad to have my letter used. My children know, and thank God that it was Mr. Curtis who made me the man I am."

The letter is addressed to Miss Curtis. We have not presumed to alter it except by the omission of parts irrelevant to our subject, and by amending the spelling. It has seemed to us a sacred tribute to the memory of the writer's friend, as well as an important testimony to the soundness of Mr. Curtis's system of reformatory treatment.

"You ask me," says the writer, "to recollect, if I can, of some of his (Mr. Curtis's) young days, or what he said about them. I remember of his telling me how hard he had to labor to get schooling, to encourage me to improve the

opportunity I had. My first sight of Mr. Curtis was in 1825. I was in prison, and under the law for crime. I was an orphan, well acquainted with all the crimes that man, woman, or boy can commit. I hated all that was good in man or woman till I saw Mr. Curtis, and for some months I hated him, till his kind love won my love. His first conversation with me was all kindness, to show me I would not be punished for the crimes I had committed, but for any I should commit while under his charge; that if I told the truth, and did as well as I knew how, he would make a man of me. At first I could not believe. I had heard too many persons promise the same; but he was the only man who, under all circumstances, never forgot his promise to any boy or girl, to my knowledge, and I had good chance to know. His first point to gain was to convince each boy and girl that he did not wish to punish them, but to gain them by love; for when he had to punish, he would talk long and kindly to the boy or girl, till the tears would flow from

his own eyes, and then from the person that was to be punished, till those that were looking on felt more sorrow for his feelings than for the boy. He would say, 'My son, it is hard, I feel it hard, but the body must suffer to make the mind obey.' His plan was for the boys to try each other by jury, and he was the judge. Each boy made his complaint, and called witnesses, and then it went to the jury, and if found guilty, the number of stripes was named by the foreman, and Mr. Curtis put it on, not in anger, but in mildness, telling them all the time how it grieved him. The boy, after punishment, had no hard thoughts of him, but felt truly sorry and ashamed to offend him. The first *capital offense* (as the phrase was with the boys) which I committed was an attempt to run away by getting over the wall. Another boy and myself hid under Mr. Miller's dwelling-house at dusk, and when the roll was called we were missed. We were soon found, and oh! the sensation, the dread of meeting that kind face with so kind a smile was worst of all. 'My

son, have you got tired of doing well? I am very sorry you could not believe me that this was a good home, and the best you could have at present. Now I must punish you, and it hurts me more than it does you.'

"One case that happened to myself bears very strong upon my mind even to this day. After trying to escape, and being caught, how powerful was the punishment of his taking me to walk with him alone, and putting his arm around my neck, and his hand in my bosom, and speaking such kind words that it ought to win any one. A case to show us his reliance on a good God was in 1826 or '27. There was a rumor of the world coming to an end; and on one particular night there was to be a ring around the moon, and, sure enough, there was, and many began to fear. About eight o'clock that summer evening, he said, 'My sons, you see that ring, as they have foretold. It denotes nothing to fear for those that do as well as they know how.' He talked kind and long till our fears departed.

"Another plan he had to punish the wicked and encourage the good was to give cake and coffee at eleven A.M. on Sunday morning.

"Any boy that went the full week without a complaint received his cake and coffee, and the others had to go without it till they could do better.

"Another (regulation), which was a great inducement to principle and honor, was to permit any boy that finished his work by Saturday afternoon, or by twelve A.M., to go and swim, and spend the afternoon at liberty; and oh, how sweet was liberty to them that had been inclosed for months by walls! And then the strong temptation to leave when finding companions that would lead us off if they could; but it never happened, I believe, in any one case. And, also, any boy that behaved well was permitted to go to the city to see his friends, and those friends would often endeavor to persuade them to leave and break their word, but they would return to meet that kind smile that we all loved to meet.

"If a boy ran away, and came back himself, he was forgiven, and placed with the best boys, and the gates would be opened for him any time when he had done his work.

"In going up stairs, it would often happen that some boy would stamp and drawl his feet after him very bad; then Mr. Curtis would call all down again, and send them up again, and continue the same process till all went up very light and easy.

"For exercise, he would form the boys in line, and then run, the boys doing their best to come up to him—very few could do it—then to the house for breakfast.

"When at table there was no talking. If you wanted the waiter you held up your hand, your thumb for vinegar, for bread three fingers, for salt one finger, and so on.

"On Sunday, after meeting, it was the custom to appoint monitors for the day in different parts to see that order was kept.

"After tea, in the long winter evenings, it was his custom to sit with us and have some

narrative read, Riley's or Paddock's a part of the time; and then he would inform us who were the inventors of the most useful articles we were acquainted with, and end by singing and telling stories."*

The writer concludes by complaining of the difficulty of writing his recollections, and says, "If it is your wish, I will come on, if God spares me, and answer any questions, and do all I can, with great pleasure, to have an opportunity of doing any thing for his honor or yours."

* In relation to this memorable period of her father's life, Miss Curtis says, "His Refuge days were engrossing, for, save his sleeping hours, few were passed with his family. My brother and I were permitted to join him at the Refuge table after their supper, and listen to father's pleasant conversations, always eliciting replies from some one. Indeed, the year I passed there is fraught with pleasant memories. *I never knew how wicked the children had been, and did not know that they were worse than myself.*" How full of pity must have been his heart who could thus guard these little outcasts with a parent's tenderness, and how wise to cultivate their self-respect by the respect of others!

It is not uncommon for the Pharisees of this world, in their self-complacent security, to look down with indifference, or contempt, or total disbelief of any likelihood of reform upon such subjects as the writer of the above letter was when, as he frankly states, "he was well acquainted with all the crimes that man, woman, or boy can commit." These Pharisees and Levites would pass him by, comfortably concluding that his moral diseases were incurable. Joseph Curtis had a better faith. The boy was sick and in prison, and in the name of his Master he visited him, and in the miraculous power of that name he laid his hand upon him, and he was made whole. His susceptibility to kindness, his generous affections, and his inward truth were brought out, and, in his own honest words, he was made the "man he is," honored with places of high trust, and more honored with the confidence and fatherly affection of Joseph Curtis's life-time.

We remember chancing at Mr. Curtis's house

on one occasion, when we observed that his serene face was lighted with an expression of unusual joy, and asked the cause of it. "S—— arrived this morning," he said, "and came straight from the ship to my house; he is a good fellow—a dear fellow."

The second document to which we have alluded is the subjoined letter. It was written by one who had opportunities for the closest observation of Mr. Curtis's superintendency of the House of Refuge.

It needs no comment. Its eloquent truths will, we feel sure, reach many hearts. It is addressed to Miss Curtis. Their father's friendships are the richest inheritance of his children.

"New York, Nov. 13, 1857.

"FRIEND ANNA,—You informed me a few days since that Miss Sedgwick was about to prepare for the press a brief memoir of your

recently deceased and ever-to-be-lamented father, and that you and she were both desirous of obtaining such little incidents of his career as might serve to illustrate his pure and beautiful nature — such, more especially, as marked his life during his superintendency of the House of Refuge.

"I would that this troublesome period did not engross so entirely each hour of every business man's time; then, perhaps, I could more efficiently aid you in carrying out your wishes. As it is, I will endeavor, however imperfectly, to say a few words which perhaps your friend may not deem unworthy of embodiment in her sketch of your blessed father's life.

"He was the first, if I have been correctly informed, to conceive, or, at least, the first to impress upon the public mind the idea of a necessity for the separation of the confirmed from the juvenile offender against the laws of society. Out of this thought, and his earnest advocacy, grew the 'Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents,' he being its first superin-

tendent. The house was opened on the first of January, 1825, on the site of the old Powder House, now Madison Square, with very limited accommodations, the apartments previously used by government officers being allotted to your father's family as a residence, and the barracks, apportioned to soldiers during the war of 1812 and 1815, set off for the reception of such children as were deemed proper recipients of this well-designed and beautiful public charity.

"Well, Anna, your father was not only your father, and the father of his own immediate offspring, but the parent and friend of every little vagrant, every neglected orphan, every youthful violator of law committed to his care.

"His gentleness and interest in their happiness he immediately made manifest to their dark and benighted understandings. His mode of addressing them, so affectionate and touching — 'My children;' his words of kindness and softness, so new to their ears, never failed to secure their immediate confidence; his con-

vincing, appealing, and sympathetic voice, his mild and beautiful eyes, as he looked into those whom he interrogated, never failed to touch their hitherto impracticable hearts; and while their tears flowed, the whole story of their hard young lives was poured forth in the best eloquence, because the eloquence of truth and nature.

"It was your father's custom (God bless him!) each evening to assemble the children committed to his care, and to seat them on both sides of a long table, he being at the head, and to invite them to ask him questions upon such subjects as might occur to their minds—the various processes of manufacture—the method of producing certain results from certain operations. I remember that once a boy, aged about twelve years, inquired, 'What attracts the magnet to the north pole?' I see your father's face *now*, as, after a pause, he replied, 'The future life of a boy asking *that* question is marked and determined.' And it was so. He became a ship-master of high repute, acquired

wealth, and unfortunately lost his life on a voyage from a Southern port to New Wales some ten years since.

"Your father, during the hours set aside for recreation, would participate in the sports and amusements of '*his children.*' I have seen him play at the game of base-ball with them. I have seen him assist them in the making and flying of their kites, shooting at marbles, 'long taw' and 'short taw,' spinning tops, and at all other sports loved so well by the young, and so necessary to the young; but when the hour of recreation was passed, the past familiarity was at once forgotten; and while each boy loved him, each boy feared, and reverenced, and obeyed him.

"His government was mild and gentle, but most positive; he *would* have unqualified obedience; and, though corporal punishment was most distasteful to him, he failed not to inflict it when necessary for the preservation of discipline. I remember one illustrative case that may not be uninteresting.

"Two boys, known as hard cases, were sent to the Refuge from the Sessions. Soon after their commitment, one of them attempted to escape, was detected, and punished. His companion reproached him for submission, and, with an oath, threatened resistance to the death under kindred circumstances. Mr. Curtis happened to overhear the young rebel, and his course was at once taken. It may not be improper to premise that the instrument of chastisement used by him, though incapable of bruising, was capable, when applied to sensitive cuticles, of producing a stinging and smarting sensation exceedingly painful. Your father said to the boy when brought before him, 'W——, you have attempted to overthrow my authority by inciting your fellow inmates to insubordination, and have imposed upon me the painful necessity of punishing you. Remove your jacket.' 'I won't.' This refusal was immediately followed by a smart application of the whip to one cheek, with a repetition of the order to remove his jacket. 'I won't,

by . . . .!' The whip fell with added force upon the opposite cheek. The contest lasted for several minutes, the boy preserving his dogged obstinacy, and your father his quiet determination to subdue him. At length the jacket was taken off, and petulantly thrown upon the floor.

"'Take up your garment, and hang it orderly over the back of that chair.' This command was also obeyed, but with a reluctance that was not submissiveness.

"'Now remove your shirt.' Here the boy burst in tears; but he stripped himself of his under-garment, and stood nude, humiliated, and subdued. The poor young wretch, I suppose, expected to be flayed alive; but no such purpose rested in the gentle heart of his conqueror; his object was accomplished, and he only said, 'W——, you have compelled me to punish you against my will; you have compelled me to enforce an obedience which should have been willingly yielded; now resume your garments, take your seat in your class, and avoid

again subjecting me to the pain you have this day occasioned me.' The boy did so; his conduct from that day forth was irreproachable, and he is now one of the wealthiest oil-merchants in—well, in one of our Eastern whaling ports.

"Mr. Curtis had a strange and almost miraculously quick insight into human character. He seemed to know, by immediate instinct, the precise kind of treatment each subject committed to his care demanded, whether a course of reserve and distance, or of familiarity and confidence; and thus he always knew where to award praise and censure, reward and punishment, appropriate to each individual character.

"I remember one case of punishment, inflicted by him, that I presume was felt more acutely than any other ever imposed by him during his continuance at the Refuge. One of the boys committed to his care was an especial favorite; he was thought to possess a larger share of intelligence, a better natural intellect, than most of the other inmates of the house.

He was active as a squirrel, fleet as a deer, and your father loved him—for the best of all reasons—because he loved your father. On a certain occasion, during the absence of Mr. Curtis, the young rogue, in the overflowing exuberance of his full blood, found his way to the summit of the wall surrounding the premises, and fearlessly leaped to the ground on the *outside*. He afterward impudently sought the gate leading to the inclosure, and demanded admission, grounding his right upon the plea of 'tenantry,' and deeming that he had perpetrated an act of exceeding cleverness. Your father, of course, heard of it upon his return, and, summoning the delinquent to his presence, addressed him thus: 'You never committed an act so unwise since I first knew you. You have shown every boy inside of these walls how he may escape; you have subjected the managers of this society to the expense of rendering escape more difficult by adding to the height of that inclosure. I am displeased with you. You have offended me.' He turned his

back, and did not for two days thereafter notice the boy. The offender could not endure this any longer; he went to him whom he loved, and said, 'Mr. Curtis, *dear*, *good* Mr. Curtis, forgive me. I can not eat, I can not sleep until I have your forgiveness. I did not know the wrong I was committing; I did not think at all.' Pardon thus humbly asked was freely accorded, and that same boy, Anna, now arrived at middle age, and having acquired opulence and position, I saw among the saddest of the mourners who followed the remains of that purely good man, your father, to his last resting-place.

"That active philanthropist, John Pintard, in 1825 presented to the Refuge library a copy of 'Sturm's Reflections on the Works of God.' The work consists, if you remember, of a series of three hundred and sixty-five brief essays on various subjects, one being appropriated to each separate day of the year. It was Mr. Curtis's wont to read one, each on its designated day, to the children over whom he presided. How

well I remember—shall I say how gratefully I remember?—the beautiful and Christian patience he exhibited in making plain, by diagram and illustration, to the ignorant and uneducated minds surrounding him, the wonders of God's creation as exhibited in that most wonderful book.

"The Sabbath-day, during your father's government of the Refuge, was made emphatically a day of rest—a festival day. The food provided for the children was a little varied from their every-day diet. The boys and girls were permitted to walk about the premises in separate groups until called in to the general reception-room to listen to, and be improved by, some simple lecture, beautifully and happily adapted to their uninformed minds. Many gentlemen residing in the neighborhood took a strong interest in the institution, and heartily co-operated with Mr. Curtis in promoting the happiness and improvement (especially on the Sabbath-day) of his interesting charge. Among these may be named prominently that free-

handed and large-hearted philanthropist, Peter Cooper, then, perhaps, in the incipient expectation of the extended prosperity which has since so deservedly crowned his efforts.

"I venture to assert that if the surviving portion of the Refuge boys and Refuge girls of 1825 and 1826 could be convened at this day, they would present an assemblage of as respectable men, and of as virtuous wives and mothers as could be selected from a corresponding number taken from any class of society living at the same period, and that *all* of them would impute their redemption from a life of misery and wretchedness to the influence of Joseph Curtis.

"'By their fruits ye shall know them.'

"Mr. Curtis was a gentleman in the fullest and most comprehensive sense of the word. If he committed an error, he was ever willing to acknowledge it. If he misjudged any one with whom he was associated, the apology was ever prompt and immediate. If he undesignedly wounded, he was always ready to apply

the healing balm. Shall I relate a little incident shadowing out this beautiful trait in his beautiful character?

"He had a few boys at the Refuge, selected as worthy his especial confidence, to guard and watch others of a more refractory nature, and to prevent any escape on their parts from the premises. Once, upon the occasion of evening roll-call, an inmate failed to answer to his name, and was deemed to have eluded the vigilance of his guards. It was determined that he could have escaped from only one outlet, and the boy having supervision of it was charged with negligence, and threatened with a loss of your father's confidence. I well remember his tearful remonstrance: 'Mr. Curtis, J—— S—— is not off these premises: he is concealed somewhere; he has not escaped me. I know I have been faithful to the trust you have reposed in me: let us search.' The search was kept up without avail until midnight, yet the watch-boy would not yield his opinion, and prayed permission to go into the fields and watch. He

was humored, and after waiting an hour with lynx eyes and impatient spirit, he detected the runaway descending a scaffold-pole on the outer side of the wall. To pounce upon him as a hound pounces upon a hare was but the work of a moment, and he was triumphantly reconducted into the inclosure whence he had escaped.

"After your father had disposed of the derelict one, he took the hand of the boy whom he had misjudged, and said, 'I have been unjust to you: I am sorry for it. Kiss me, my son; good-night. Go to bed and sleep; it is late.' But that boy was too happy and too exultant to sleep that night. He had enjoyed your father's approving smile, his word of commendation; and these were more precious to the children he governed than any other reward, however substantial in character.

"I happened in your father's office in Spring Street one day in April, 1827. A boy who had formerly been under his care, and who was going West, came to say farewell. The lad

doubted the stability of his own resolutions of reformation, and, with overflowing eyes, said, 'Oh! Mr. Curtis, I do not remember ever to have listened to a father's admonitions, but I feel that, could I be with you or under your immediate supervision, I should never, never again go astray.' He was taken gently by the hand and thus addressed: 'My son, consider me as your father, and let every act of your future life be preceded by the self-imposed question, "Would my father approve this?"' The boy went on his way, and is now at the head of one of the largest publishing houses in the State of Ohio.

"Your father was especially distinguished for his great love of order and system, and for the most scrupulous cleanliness. He loved the free air of God's free atmosphere, and he loved that all should inhale it in its unmixed purity. His method of ventilation has, I believe, been adopted in most of our public institutions. His theories on this most important subject were first brought into practical operation in the

construction of the new House of Refuge, and were found eminently beneficial. The best illustration of this is perhaps exhibited in the fact that during his government of eighteen months at the Refuge, with a family of children averaging nearly one hundred daily, *not one single death occurred.* The location selected for the buildings was not a healthful one. It was surrounded by swampy grounds and stagnant ponds, and was redolent of miasmatic influences. Intermittent and remittent fevers were the prevalent diseases, and in the summer season many children were prostrated. Good ventilation and strict cleanliness were doubtless excellent auxiliaries to their recovery, but these were not all. They had, besides, anxious and affectionate nursing. Many a time at midnight have I seen that good Samaritan, your father, with noiseless tread move from couch to couch, bathing a heated forehead here, cooling a hot cheek there, moistening the parched lips and fevered tongue of another, and all with a gentleness unsurpassed by woman's gentle-

ness. Oh, Anna! I know his children hold his memory in sacred reverence; they can not do so overmuch.

"The Rev. Dr. Bellows, upon the occasion of his discourse at your father's funeral, justly remarked that he was known to thousands of children. He might have gone farther. It would be hardly extravagant to say that he was known to most of the children in this widely extended metropolis. I have frequently walked with him in localities where the poor most do congregate. I have seen their sports suspended, and have heard them smilingly whisper one to the other, 'That is Mr. Curtis; do *you* know him? *I do.*' They would all seem to crave from him some little sign or token of recognition; and when his hand was laid on the head of one, and the cheek of another affectionately patted, the chin of a third gently *chucked*, the hair of another softly stroked down, and the loving and encouraging word spoken to all, then were the seeds of his own generous nature broadcast, and, like bread

thrown upon the waters, will be found after many days.

"He was ever full of the spirit of Christ when he said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me;' and, 'Love one another.' In conclusion, I may quote from a less sacred authority, 'He was a man: take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again.'"

It may surprise those who have forgotten that Columbus was cast down from the eminence he had attained and taken home a prisoner, or those who have never observed how the prejudiced, the ignorant, inexperienced, and conceited obstruct with medieval notions, or their own crude ideas fostered by their petty vanities, the most enlightend projects, to hear that Mr. Curtis was opposed by petty distrusts and meddling. Dr. Bellows, in the funeral sermon from which we have already quoted, thus states the circumstance that led to Mr. Curtis's resignation of the office of superintendent.

"On one occasion a boy ran away, and, after a few days, full of penitence for his ingratitude, returned, confessed his fault, and entreated forgiveness. Satisfied of his sincerity, Mr. Curtis forgave him. The directors, doubting this policy of mercy, disapproved his conduct, and instructed him, by unanimous vote, to give this runaway a certain number of lashes. Mr. Curtis begged them to reconsider their order. He had from his heart forgiven the boy, who had returned to duty, and had only seen good from his course; he could not inflict what must now be a pure vengeance upon his back. The directors, however, reasserted their directions to lash him. Again he remonstrated, and again they reaffirmed their order, with instructions to the committee not to leave the premises until they had seen the blows inflicted. Mr. Curtis, seeing no alternative, then came forward with the keys of the institution, and said, 'Gentlemen, I am not a slave-driver, and I can not whip a boy whom from my heart I have forgiven. I resign the keys of the Refuge.' The

directors, moved by his firmness, and respecting his convictions, did not accept his resignation, and remitted the lashes. But he found himself so hampered by a policy that put little faith in human nature, and doubted the power of love, that he did not long retain his position." He could not, with his steadfastness in truth and justice.*

Matters were harmonized for the time, but it was quite evident there could not be joint action between minds so diametrically opposed

* It is satisfactory to find an accordance of opinion on the subject of corporal punishment between the best governors of youth our age has produced. Dr. Arnold's biographer says of him, "He made flogging only his 'ratio ultima;'" and, "Talking he tried to the uttermost." Dr. Arnold himself says, "I believe boys may be governed a great deal by gentle methods and kindness, and appealing to their better feelings, if you show that you are not afraid of them. I have seen great boys, six feet high, shed tears when I have sent for them up into my room, and spoken to them quietly in private for not knowing their lessons; and I have found this treatment producing its effects afterward in making them better. But, of course, deeds must second words when needful, or words will soon be laughed at."

as Mr. Curtis's and the gentlemen (or some of them) directors.

We have before us a document written by Mr. Curtis himself, and presented to the Board of Directors at his final resignation of his office. It is a valuable exponent of his views, which it gives with directness, and with his "only art, the simple truth." The pragmatical ignorance and gross injustice he had to contend with are, without any sign of irritation or resentment, made manifest. Throughout the controversy, his dignity was maintained without the sacrifice of modesty or meekness.

The contest has passed away and is forgotten; the actors in it have passed away too, and now, as we believe, see eye to eye; but still the document is interesting, as it exhibits the combined firmness and gentleness that made Joseph Curtis a model character, and it is also of permanent importance, as it elicits and reiterates the principles and rules by which he successfully trained and absolutely reformed the most difficult of young subjects.

It is not necessary to insert the whole document, as it is in some measure anticipated in the most satisfactory manner by the details in the letters we have given. In them it has been seen that the superintendent had few laws, that they were so simply expressed that a child of ten years could perfectly comprehend them, and that to these laws he required implicit, unswerving obedience. But it is not by laws that the corrupted can be reformed, the ignorant instructed, the degraded raised. "Our institution," said Mr. Curtis, "can not be managed like a manufactory: it is not to decide how the sick shall be provided for; it is not to say whether the subjects shall work at such or such kinds of work, and how they shall be fed and clothed; but it is to decide how shall the poor, misguided, and neglected youth be taught to wash his face, comb his hair, tie his shoe, sit erect, keep out of the dirt, learn his book, bridle his tongue, and do as he is told. These are little things, it is true, but, small as they are, they require a work that no man, in my opin-

ion, can give a theory for; nor, till he has an opportunity (by actual observation) to see the fruit produced by a particular course, either approve or condemn. It will be found from experience that what is expedient to-day may be inexpedient to-morrow. Many things may be done that to a casual observer may seem inadmissible, but still, rightly managed, are productive of good. To decide on all these is the work of the superintendent."

Mr. Curtis professes not to have had his faith increased in the ball and chain and whip system by his observation. They "might effect external obedience, but wrought no change of thought or habit." His first care was to make the child feel that he had come to a home, not to a prison; that it depended on himself whether he should stay there till he was twenty-one, or whether, so soon as there was a good prospect that he would make a useful and respectable citizen, he should be sent to a good place. "With one exception," he says, "they did not at first believe me." They were accustomed to

threats rarely executed, and to promises seldom fulfilled; and thus they believed Mr. Curtis's promises, like the rest, were merely bribes to good behavior.* He imputed the degradation of the children to the neglect, mismanagement, and bad examples of their parents, "more especially the mothers." If they could be thus degraded by mismanagement, he argued they could be raised by right training. "His first object," he says, "was to get their confidence by reposing confidence in their professions, and putting them upon their honor, thereby instilling into their hearts sensations to which they were strangers. Kind treatment alone can produce these sensations."

"It is now more than a year," continues Mr. Curtis, "since we have been under the necessity of keeping a day-guard as well as a night-

* Our readers will recall the declaration in one of the letters of the Refuge writers: "Mr. Curtis was the only man who, under all circumstances, never forgot his promise to any boy or girl, to my knowledge, and I had a good chance to know."

watch. The advantage of this in saving expense to the institution, as well as in the many moral impressions made on our boys, can be estimated by all who have witnessed the progress of our labors, and who know the difficulties involved in all new and untried undertakings.

"I feel an assurance in saying that, so far as my experience has gone, and so far as my judgment is capable of suggesting, *this liberty*, *this confidence*, this respect which we give to the honor of the subjects, is the key to open to the benighted mind a light which shows the path to manhood and respectability. It is not enough that I can give my guard the keys of the gate, trust him on the walls to guard others, or send him out of an errand; no, he has a pride—and who shall say it is not laudable? in knowing, and showing to his mates and relatives that he can be trusted to go to town alone, and say to his mother in language more expressive than words, 'I am a good boy, and shall become a respectable man, and at some future day I am in hopes to repay you

for the distress you have experienced in seeing your son arraigned as a criminal and sentenced to the penitentiary.'

"It is now about fourteen months since I have been in the habit of giving this indulgence to nine of my boys, to visit once a month their friends for about three hours; in doing this there has been but one instance of overstaying the time allotted, and in that case no disrespect to the orders was intended. About three months since I learned from the acting committee that they expected the rules and regulations would be respected by me. These forbade any boy leaving the premises without permission from the acting committee. From that time to this I have had no small difficulty in keeping their minds at ease until a further decision could be had by a reference to the Board."

Mr. Curtis felt that this trust in the boys was the mainspring of his work, and he reiterates his argument, "I can not too forcibly call their attention" (that of the Board) "to the consideration of this subject, for on that much de-

pends. I *know* the minds of the boys on this point, and it is not different from what our own would be in their situation; this warrants me in saying that, so long as they are impressed with the idea that this institution is a prison, and that they are to be confined until they are of age (if they learn a trade here), you will be disappointed in the finishing of your labors.

"I do not believe that the mind of a human being can be brought to that quiet and progressive state of respect for himself and others while the body is suffering punishment; of this I have had abundant proof in the many cases of imprisonment—the ball and chain, and corporal punishment which I have been under the necessity of inflicting. Punishment can not create that state of feeling which elevates the mind, and brings into operation that spirit which God has given to man alone. 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

"And the only method to bring about this happy state of feeling is to inculcate the idea that kind and affectionate feeling will always

follow good behavior; that, if they should remain here till of age, it is more from their own choice than otherwise; and that this privilege of visiting their friends at stated periods for a few minutes, and other privileges, will be extended to them so soon as the superintendent can be satisfied from their improved conduct that they are worthy of confidence, and that these favors will not be abused."

It is not necessary, and therefore would now be an ungracious task, to dwell on the particulars of the superintendent's controversy with the committee. They were, for the most part, men of *routine* (a term unfortunately well understood at the present time), men of dogmas, of theories, of cast-iron systems; they might, as Mr. Curtis hinted, organize a manufactory, or arrange a work-house; they might, perhaps, comprehend the bones and muscles of the human frame, but they could never understand its susceptible nerves and delicate fibres; they might beat a drum or blow a trumpet, but they could not restore to musical harmonies the

finest and most complicated instrument formed by the Creator's hand. This work was for such a man as Joseph Curtis, with judgment ripened by acute observation and experience, learned in the dispositions of children, and learning every day, himself ductile, full of sympathy, and overflowing with love, and gifted by Heaven with that *authority* which gave to all his other qualities force and effect; and, with all this fitness, looking, as he modestly asserts, for the aids of divine grace.

But with all these qualifications there was but one alternative for the superintendent. He must submit to personal injustice from the committee, he must be impeded and frustrated at every step by their "rules and regulations," he must sacrifice his parental care to their stern, old-fashioned, inflexible, mischievous discipline, or—he must resign. "After reviewing and comparing my own feelings," he says, "with the views and feelings of the acting committee, I have necessarily come to the determination that I can not, in justice to you or

to myself, consent to be any longer considered as superintendent of this institution." Accordingly, on the 5th of May, 1826, his connection as superintendent with the institution was dissolved; but his interest in it never ceased. He harbored no petty resentments; he was not the less interested in his young subjects because their progress could no longer reflect glory on himself.

He maintained to the end of his life the habit of visiting the institution and talking with the children, and the last Sunday afternoon of his life, thirty years after his official duties were ended, he spent there. All who knew him intimately must have observed his frequent recurrence to "the Refuge," as he always termed it, and the tender tone of voice and moistening of his eye when he spoke of it. It was as the mother speaks of her little dependents in the nursery. One of his last requests to his family was that his portrait might be hung at the "Refuge," not certainly to preserve the memorial of his services, but probably from a hope

that it might link the hearts of these young people to him whose heart had been so bound to them.

We can not close this instructive chapter of Joseph Curtis's life without expressing our earnest hope that it may impress the importance of selecting the *right* individuals to administer public charities. For want of this, they either utterly fail or do but half the good they might. No endowment, no laws, no organization can be an equivalent for this requisite.

CHAPTER VI.

SCHOOL FOR APPRENTICES.

"All worldly joy to him was less
Than the one joy of doing kindness."

AFTER leaving the House of Refuge in 1826, Mr. Curtis had to enter upon a new business. He had no money capital; but mark this, my young readers, a character for honesty, industry, and ingenuity is a more certain capital, a capital without risk, always finding some business to enter upon, come what may, *crisis*, *panic*, or adversity of any kind. With this capital, and no other, he was admitted as an equal partner in a jewel and pencil-case manufactory, then a large, increasing, and very profitable establishment. On entering upon this lucrative business, if Mr. Curtis had resembled many men in our city, he would have been elated by his sudden increase of means and flattering

prospects. He would have taken a "*genteel*" house, furnished it "genteelly," dressed his wife and children "genteelly," indulged himself in an occasional bottle of Champagne and his daily cigars, and, in short, run into that purely selfish, mean, and unproductive life too common, alas! in our great city of New York, and which indicates a very low grade of mental and moral education. But what did Mr. Curtis do? He found fourteen apprentices in the establishment; their number was afterward augmented to thirty. His first consideration was for them —his first consideration was always for young people; they had the material that was to be moulded and formed, and by training them he could best secure their happiness, and benefit his country by preparing for it good citizens. He was a true patriot, and no politician.

He found these apprentices, some of them living in the families of their employers, and others boarding in cheap lodging-houses. He collected them all in a house adjoining his own home, and there entered upon a system of train-

ing which he detailed in a letter to a friend, at that friend's request, who vainly hoped the system might be diffused.

We shall transcribe a great portion of the letter, which is modestly prefaced with a confession of his "deficient education."

After their first breakfast he read the Scriptures to them, and then told them that, as they were henceforth to live together, they should adopt some rule of life, and in the evening they would again meet to consider what that rule should be.

In the evening he began by stating that great truth which lies at the foundation of our country's Declaration of Independence, that all men are in the pursuit of happiness, and then led them to consider what would most surely promote their happiness here and hereafter. He told them the secret lay in a few words taught by Christ, and proven by all observation and experience: "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." He then paraphrased this golden rule, and made it

plain to the boys that, as each one loved to have his own way and will, it was best to come to an understanding how each should best secure his own rights, and prevent the infringement of the rights of others; that, as time was their most precious possession, they should first agree how that was to be disposed of.

"I proposed, therefore," writes Mr. Curtis, "that a committee should be appointed to take the subject into consideration, and report at their earliest convenience." The following report was duly presented:

"Mr. Curtis is our executive. Each boy is a member of the republic, and all rules and regulations, and the execution of the same, shall be made and adjudged by the body.

"The hour for going to bed shall be ten o'clock, when the lights shall be all extinguished."

("This," says Mr. Curtis, "I did, and it gave me an opportunity to observe and correct what many mothers neglect, the maintenance of neatness and comfort in their bed-rooms, and their

perfect ventilation." One of his family says, "My father never omitted going every night to the bed of each apprentice." To a friend he himself said, "I always tucked in the littlest fellows, and gave them a good-night kiss.")

We proceed with the articles of this juvenile Constitution. "Not a word is to be spoken unless addressed to the foreman of the room, who is chosen by the inmates of the room, to hold his appointment during pleasure. His duty is to see that order, decency, and decorum are observed, and that every garment is kept in its place.

"On Sabbath-days each member must attend the stated meetings of the church his parents shall select, unless excused by the executive.

"Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings shall be devoted to English studies; Tuesday and Friday evenings to such amusements as shall be agreed on for the time; Saturday evening to gymnasium exercises, and to cleansing the body with soap and water.

"Every Monday evening a chairman must be balloted for to take the chair of the executive during his absence.

"No member can attend a fire without the permission of the executive.

"The body can pardon or release from any punishment."

Thus far the Constitution, so called. It was not very formally drafted, the boys not being much more fit for that nice work than the audacious politicians of the French Revolution, who would make a Constitution one day and abolish it the next.

It was drafted by the boys, but, as there gleams through it the wisdom of more experience than theirs, they were probably docile to their teacher's suggestions.

The value of time, the necessity of order, decency, decorum, and cleanliness, are made prominent. If we had then enjoyed the facilities of the Croton water, Mr. Curtis would have re-

quired a daily bath. Gymnastic exercises were then but just introduced into a few of our highest schools, and this vigilant man, always on the watch-tower, always looking out for every kind of education in the life-school, provided gymnastics for these boys at a sedentary trade.

Regular attendance at church was required. Mr. Curtis was neither bigot nor sectarian. His religion was not something apart from his week-day life; it did not consist in "long prayers" and solemn faces, and "bowing the head down like a bulrush." It was the religion of a cheerful, loving spirit; the religion that "honors all men," that looseth the bands of the wicked, that "undoeth heavy burdens;" the religion from which "the light breaks forth as the morning." He reverenced God, the Father of all; he reverenced His Word, and he reverenced His day of rest. He did not give in to the notion of making it a day of mere amusement. He wished his boys to make it a day of worship, of peace, of holy medita-

tion, of charitable deeds, and of cheerful social enjoyment among dear friends.

Mr. Curtis had a horror of the tendency to rowdyism among some of our boys, and from that came the prohibition to attend fires.

The working of this little in-door republic is better shown in what Mr. Curtis called "*Practice*" than in this informal instrument of a Constitution.

OUR PRACTICE.

"Breakfast at seven o'clock, dinner at one, supper at seven o'clock the year round: do not work after seven o'clock. After breakfast read a portion of Scripture. After dinner select reading for about ten minutes; then from fifteen to thirty minutes were occupied by communications from the chair, or each one reading his library-book from the 'Mechanics' Society Library.' These, for convenience, were placed on a shelf under the table. Reading was permitted during the carving; each waited till all were served." By these regulations Mr. Curtis meant to secure quiet and good

manners at table, and to avoid the hurry and rush from eating to work so prevalent in our working nation, so fatal to health and to good manners, and so unfavorable to the innocent and refining pleasures of our social existence.

After tea the little republic was resolved into a court of inquiry and trial. "The chair asks if there is any business. This question embraces all that relates to our moral walk, all social offenses, such as nicknaming, teasing, twitting, provoking, ridiculing, etc., up to those of striking, swearing, lying, stealing, etc. The charge is made, the accused rises and names five jurors. The facts are stated, and, if required, proven; the pleadings are had; the charge is given from the chair, and the offense commented on; the jurors retire, elect their foreman, who, when they have agreed (which is not always till our next sitting), reports the verdict. The adjudged has the right of an appeal to the body, or a rehearing by the same jurors. Their verdicts are usually, for the first offense, a reprimand from the chair; for the

second, some light deprivation of their pleasures, such as not eating at the table, exclusion from the dining-room, and being condemned to eat their meals at their work-bench and go thence to bed, to confinement within the premises, and to be shut up in Coventry,* and, last and worst, an expulsion from the body, and restraint to the sole control of the executive. The offender can only be restored by a vote of two thirds of the body. New-comers sometimes proving intractable, the jurors, after several trials, have recommended 'that they be returned to their parents.'"

Mr. Curtis proceeds to state the operation of his system. He found there was no difficulty in saving an hour every day from work for mental improvement, nor in quickening the observation of his boys, and rousing their curiosity to understand the nature of the things before their eyes. He pursued a course not uncommon with intelligent parents, and turned

* A punishment which excludes the culprit from all companionship and conversation.

the meal-times, which, with the lower animals only, should be mere feeding-time, into seasons of pleasant instruction. The boys were set to inquire into the composition of their bread and butter, the history of the potato, etc. Such as could write (many could not when they first came to the establishment) were to state the result of their inquiries. These extended to every country and clime, and to their history in past ages. The boys ascertained the use and relative value of vegetables, the relative condition of different countries producing them; they learned the processes of preparation from the cooking of potatoes to the making of molasses and sugar. Well instructed in their nature and effects, no difficulty was found, Mr. Curtis says, in inducing his boys to reject unripe fruit. They discriminated between wholesome and unwholesome vegetables, would rejoice in cole-slaw (cabbage-salad), and reject the indigestible boiled cabbage. That knowledge is power is a common maxim; knowledge was health in this case, for Mr. Curtis says

"the health of our boys was much promoted by these inquiries. During the epidemics that have visited the city, we have enjoyed a state of health that not only called forth the admiration of the physicians, but the comments of our neighbors. Not a death nor an indisposition of three days occurred in our family. We had but one case of cholera, and that yielded easily. I can not admit that any of my family became temperate in eating or select in their food but *under a full conviction* that both tended to the promotion of health.

"From vegetable our boys proceeded to an investigation of animal food." And here Mr. Curtis wisely remarks that, though an honest observation shows that animal food is not indispensable to sedentary persons, yet, as wise men have understood these matters better than we (and wise men eat meat), it is not worth while to depart from their usages.

He says he was not a little amused with the confused notions of the boys in the beginning, some putting the horse at the head of the ani-

mals, others the hen, some being champions for the goose, and many for the dog. But it appears they did not go very far in their investigations without coming to a juster classification. If the boys had commanded the ark, they would have rejected the Salique law, and have made the cow the queen of the kingdom within it. "They found, in pursuing their inquiries," says Mr. Curtis, "how much that animal contributes to our comfort and convenience. Many of our city children are reared to manhood, and thought to be learned, and yet do not know what our boys were now informed of, viz., how butter and cheese are made. They were instructed in the art and mystery of the tanner, the currier, the dyer, the comb, the button, and the glove maker. They heard for the first time a fact, of which I have known English gold-beaters, that had worked ten years at their trade, to be ignorant, viz., that the gold-beater's skin was from the cow, and that the gold leaf so much used could not be made without it." Mr. Curtis goes on to detail their studies in the

animal kingdom, and how their knowledge of the beneficent uses of animals led his boys to the conclusion that "nothing was made in vain, and that, though they could not perhaps see the utility of the crow, the kingfisher, the rat, musquito, flea, etc., they inferred it from what they did know; and they learned to look reverently upon the meanest of God's creatures, and never wantonly to kill or torment them."

From animals he directed their attention to metals. They were workmen in gold and silver, and it was easy to awaken their curiosity about them. They began with the mining; went through all the subtle processes of preparation of the ore, and the manufacture of tools. Thence they proceeded to chemistry, the laws of heat, the nature of alkalies, salts, and all the various agencies involved in their trade.

They were soon made to realize the necessity of a good English education, and readily applied themselves to learning reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. In these branches Mr. Curtis was himself their teacher, and "their

proficiency," he says, "was as great as if they had paid twenty or thirty dollars a quarter." For higher branches teachers were employed and paid by the firm. Drawing was included among these. Latin and French some learned, says Mr. Curtis, but "outside the establishment," from which we infer that such of the lads as pursued these studies (rather rare among mechanics' apprentices) themselves paid their teachers. "Instruction in the nature of the government of the country and its laws was not neglected. They attended courses of lectures on the sciences, and had season tickets to Peale's Museum." They were paid for by the liberal firm, and, we presume, were included among the "limited amusements" of which, as Mr. Curtis states, the firm defrayed the expense.

At the end of these details of his enlightened and benevolent labor, Mr. Curtis says, with a modesty to be admired, "Perhaps I have fatigued you with what was but a common-sense practice, and you may rather hear how these

lads got on with their trade. Each boy had a book in the shop in which he entered his day's work, and extended its value as soon as he could to the established price, one dollar and a half per day; then, at his own election, he began task-work, and all that he could earn over that sum was passed to his credit. It was not unusual, before the first year expired, for him to earn from twenty to twenty-five cents excess each day, and before he was of age from fifty cents to one dollar each day. Many, when of age, had, either in the Bank of Savings or in our hands, from three hundred to six hundred dollars, and that after paying each our charge of fifty dollars—our terms, including a supply of their wants (board and clothing), amounting to that sum. Some among them, either from laziness or want of mechanical talent, ended in our debt."

It appears that the superior intellectual education of the apprentices did not interfere with their progress in their trade. Mr. Curtis says, "We think some of our boys have shown

themselves superior to any in this country. More than one has done work in watch-cases and dials that has not been equaled in England.

"The advantages of our boys for variety of work have been greater than in any other shop in the city. Colored men were employed for cleaning the shop and for the dirty work usually done by the youngest boys, so that they went at once to their craft. It was the study of their employers to elicit their thinking faculties, and if any one suggested an improvement in a tool to facilitate his work, he was allowed the benefit of it. This practice led the boy, if he had a genius for invention, to discover it. Some became tool-makers of masterly workmanship, and executors of work that in Europe embraces six or eight distinct branches." Mr. Curtis expresses his conviction that the received opinion that it takes six or seven years to perfect a workman is erroneous. "If," he says, "the boy is made a reflecting being, and proper encouragement is given to him to as-

certain what talent he may possess, he may learn in the working of wood and metal all he is capable of in one year."

Mr. Curtis's opinion on this subject is entitled to our respect. He was not a "*fast*" man. No man ever better loved completeness and finish.

Mr. Curtis maintains that development of talent and acquisition of knowledge, and not tariffs and legislative enactments, are necessary to make us, through our manufacturers, independent of England. "Let," he says, "our mechanical arts be as free as our agriculture, and they will be found to stand upon a foundation that England (nor Europe) can not attain until she changes her mode of treating her apprentices. They are taught to do as they are told, and not taught to think, and in this way are made to serve capitalists. The great doctrine of division of labor, which makes a pin, in its formation, pass through five or six hands, will forever hold the operator in servitude."

Mr. Curtis appeals to the fact: "Till within

five or six years," he says (we believe his letter, which bears no date, was written about 1835), "it was believed that no American workman could make a watch-case or dial. About five years since we selected two of our boys and began case-making. None of us had ever made one or seen one made. Before two years expired one of the boys was out of his time, and during the six months thereafter he earned by piece-work eight hundred and fifty dollars. The other, whose field was more extended, executed, before two years expired, the variety of work in watch-cases which, in England, required nine different workmen, each of whom must have served his regular apprenticeship, and could not do a stroke of work beyond that which he had been taught. His work was as well made as any done in England. As soon as he was out of his time we offered him fifteen hundred dollars a year. He declined our offer, and began business, having no capital but his trade, his character, and four hundred dollars. He has been two years in

business, is making money, and his work takes precedence of English work.

"We gave six dollars a day to the other boy. He is now our successor in this branch; has apprentices, who, after serving a year, are working with him at journeymen's wages from two to three dollars per day. There are similar facts in relation to the pencil-making business. We could have sent them to England and received a good profit any time these five years but for this high tariff. This is not true of our business only. I know no manufacture yet attempted in this country at which we can not work cheaper and better than they, unless they have an advantage in the raw material and in coal.

"One word," Mr. Curtis says in conclusion, "as to the acquirements made by my boys in their schooling. They were all fair writers; sufficiently acquainted with figures for our business; most of them understood book-keeping, and all had some knowledge of geography and history. Some among them understood the

Latin and French grammar, and one (who could earn from two and a half to three dollars per day) wrote well. Many of his pieces appeared in the Mirror and other periodicals. His taste, unhappily, was for writing plays, some of which our boys represented for their amusement before their friends on our premises. I found it expedient to tolerate amusements that I could have wished to dispense with; but we were obliged to make our own society, as no visiting, except on special occasions, was permitted, unless with their parents."

We have heard Mr. Curtis give a notable instance of the benefit he derived from the development of dramatic taste among his boys—a taste so deeply implanted in nature that a wise man, seeing it is bootless to attempt to eradicate it, should study to give it a right direction. This dramatic tendency is like some plants; if left to prurient growth, they overrun and outroot less beautiful but more nutritious plants, and themselves run to useless excess, and, instead of blossoming in sweet odorous flowers,

throw out poisonous abortions. God set all the plants in the garden, but he set man to tend them; so he gave universally the love of dramatic entertainment. Man has perverted it from use to abuse. In 1831, when for the first time the cholera visited New York, there was a general panic. The workshops were, for the most part, abandoned, and much confusion and distress ensued. It was then disputed whether the disease was contagious. Mr. Curtis believed that it was not, and that the disease might be averted by scrupulous temperance, neatness, and ventilation, if the courage and cheerfulness of the boys were sustained. He consulted their parents and his partners, and the result was that their workshop was kept open. Mr. Curtis's wife and children of course remained in the city. The children of others were not to be exposed to a danger he feared for his own. The boys had no recreation out of doors, and their several talents were taxed for amusement. The playwright wrote a play; the lads that had a taste for painting painted the scenes;

those skilled in mechanics arranged them; they all were, for the nonce, players, and a play was got up that, if not quite as diverting as the Pyramus and Thisbe of Bottom the Weaver, served the excellent purpose of keeping the bright spirit of health among them. The work by day, and the little home-theatre at evening, kept off the demon. There was but one case of cholera, and that yielded at once. Mr. Curtis's experiment was completely successful, and should have been published from one end of the land to the other; but he was a man of deeds, not words, and so at the distance of twenty-six years a fact is first recorded that deserves a place in every journal of health. We hope it may make some impression on our dear schoolboy and schoolgirl readers. For them it was that Mr. Curtis lighted his candle —that is, to them he mainly devoted his talents—and it is for them that we chiefly hope to preserve the light of his example. They see how he baffled that most frightful disease, the cholera. Diseases will come; they will pre-

vail in our cities, and they will find their food and ministers in filthy dens, in cellars, and garrets, and among people whose blood is corrupted with bad food and strong drink. But God helps those who help themselves. Let those sprightly spirits, Activity and Cheerfulness, go with you to your work; and those smiling ones, Temperance, and Cleanliness, and Family Kindness, dwell in your homes; and, depend on it, when the Destroyer comes, he will pass over you, seeing a mark upon your habitations as plain as that upon "the door-posts and lintels" of the Israelites.

We would rather Mr. Curtis's merits should be told by the beautiful facts of his life than by any encomiums of ours; but we must entreat our readers to pause upon this work of his for his apprentices. There may be others who have done likewise, and who have never been heard of, because their work was as noiseless as his. What would New York now be—to what a high mark in man's moral progress our country might now have risen, if there

were many other mechanics fathers and benefactors to their apprentices, as Mr. Curtis was; if the masters were so to their slaves; if the manufacturer, in his great field of labor, spared some of his zeal and vigilance from the money-profits, and gave it to the perdurable profits in human improvement; if even fathers were to their children what Joseph Curtis was to his apprentices! Truly God is patient with his creatures!

But this beautiful work was destined to an untimely end, and by the baleful influence of that ever-recurring vice of our "fast" people, the making haste to be rich.

This is the vice of our country, the mania of our city. Mr. Curtis's partners had caught it. His sound mind resisted the contagion. The fancy speculation of that time sprang from the discovery of gold in Virginia and North Carolina. Mr. Curtis's partners were eager to embark in it. He, with characteristic moderation, remonstrated, repeating the old adage, "Shoemakers, stick to your last." "We are rich," he

said, "making more money than we or our families shall ever need: let well enough alone." They insisted, and he, being a junior partner, was obliged to yield. The consequence was failure of the concern.

Mr. Curtis made a settlement of their affairs through multiplied and perplexing difficulties. All the debts, excepting those of the gold mines, were paid by him as financier of the concern, and he came out of these pecuniary embarrassments as few men do, with untarnished honor, and a spotless good name.

There are many kind-hearted but weak people in the world, who make themselves very busy in supplying the wants of the poor, but do not reflect how much better it is to teach the poor how to supply their own wants. Mr. Curtis's object was to secure to the lads in his charge the power of independence and progress, and the ability to help others. His first duty, for they were apprenticed to him for a trade, was to teach them that trade, and that it appears he did completely. He was himself an

ingenious and finished mechanic. He rejoiced in good work faithfully done. He meant to have his apprentices not only up to the mark, but to excel other workmen. To accomplish this, he well knew they must not be themselves mere machines, but thinking beings; so he informed and stimulated their minds. Nor did he mean to make them merely first-rate mechanics, but, extending their instruction far beyond the bounds of the workshop, he turned out intelligent men, quite fit to be agreeable companions (perchance often instructors) to men who are brought up in colleges, and law, medical, and theological schools.

The best part of his training, the most delicate and difficult, that on which he was most intent, in which he never wearied, morning, noon, or night, he was too modest to set down in the communication to his friend from which we have quoted. He labored to make his boys good mechanics and intelligent men: this was necessary to their success and good standing in life; but he desired much more to make them

good Christian men, for this he felt to be essential beyond this short and uncertain life; so he cultivated their good affections, he watched against their selfish propensities, he tried to put in them the generous feeling that should make them refuse any seeming good to themselves that must involve others in loss. He never wearied his boys with what boys very soon weary of, and call, because it does weary them, preaching; but his daily life spoke to their hearts, and it flowered out from that text, "Deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

Manners were a great point with Mr. Curtis. He regarded them as the expression and demonstration of the social virtues. He certainly was not a polished man, but he never offended against any essential of good manners. Can one imagine a good Christian without these essentials—modesty, gentleness, reverence, unselfishness? These Christian virtues strike the root of good manners.

When Mr. Curtis's connection with his ap-

prentices was dissolved, "it was," says Miss Curtis, "a grievous time to my father. Even to this day we hear those who were his apprentices say, 'Those days in the "corner house" were the happiest of our lives.'"

CHAPTER VII.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK.

"Oh that I were an orange-tree,
That busie plant!
Then should I ever laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for him that dressed me."

As Hugh Miller has aptly entitled his autobiography "My Schools and Schoolmasters," so might this true story of Joseph Curtis's life be divided into periods of beneficence, and called his Harvest-fields and Harvests. The broadest and richest of these was in the Public Schools.

Teaching, as we have already had occasion to quote from Mr. Curtis himself, was his vocation—his vocation, we believe, in the strict catholic sense. The divine call was in his fitness for the work. He began, as has been told, in the early days of his married life, with the

instruction of a class of young men in the evenings at his own house; then followed his care of the schools of the Manumission Society; then his sacred office at the House of Refuge; then his beautiful school for his apprentices; and, finally, his indefatigable and unparalleled work for the Public Schools, of which we are now to give some particulars. He became a member of the Public School Society in 1839, and continued his membership till 1853, the epoch of its dissolution, or, rather, the epoch when the Public Schools and the Ward Schools were amalgamated. He then went into the Board of Education as one of its fifteen commissioners, and "worked diligently," says George Trimble, his honored associate, "till his term expired."

Some of our young friends still in the Public Schools must remember him—a man about five feet eight inches in height; not too high to stoop to all their little wants. A very modest, quiet-looking old gentleman he was, so neat and simple in his apparel that one might

have mistaken him for a member of the Society of Friends; but he was the friend of all humanity, restricted to no society. The children's loving memory will recall his large, soft, dark gray eye; his dark hair, silvered by time, and curling round his temples and neck; his smile, that was like sunshine to them, all combining to give him an expression of benignity that made them look up to him with love more than fear, even when he rebuked them; and sure were they, when he walked with noiseless steps up and down the long school-room, and in and out among the benches, that no misdemeanor would escape that watchful gray eye, no slovenly habit with pen or sponge, no dirty face, soiled hands, dirty nails, unbrushed hair, or even unbrushed shoes, would pass unnoticed. A boy soiling the upper leather of one shoe with the sole of another, or lounging over his desk, or a girl stooping over her task, never escaped his rebuking but gentle tap. He would stop to right an awry collar, or to adjust a little girl's apron slovenly put on, giving her, at the

same time, some pithy maxim, expressing the value of neatness and order, and with it such a loving pat on her cheek as would make it dimple with a smile; and so, as sunshine causes the plants to grow, his love made the counsel thrive. The dreadful solemnity of his displeasure at any violence, or vulgarity, or falsehood these children can never forget; nor how difficult it was to hide vice or foible from his eye. His right of guardianship was demonstrated to them in modes that left them no desire to question it. How many acts of parental care are remembered by the successive generations that have passed under his supervision! Mothers who now know what it is to watch over helpless little children, recount that when they were such, and belonged to the Primary School in Crosby Street, there was a cold day, when it had been snowing from early morning. The snows were drifted in the streets, the wind was howling, and the short winter's day was drawing to a close, and their hearts were full of dread of encountering the driving, blinding

snow in their way to their obscure homes. Mr. Curtis came (some of them "knew he would," as the poor frozen sailors said to Dr. Kane) with three large, roomy sleighs (got at his own expense), packed all the little ones in, took the least into his own care, and did not leave them till they were all safe with their mothers.

Many such touching acts of kindness might be recorded; but, though they impress us like the delicious showers in a drought, they bear no comparison to that steady work and care, that, like the providential succession of seed-time and harvest, day and night, marked Mr. Curtis's devotion to the schools. "He discovered at an early period the deceptive manner in which examinations were carried on, and changed the whole policy to such a degree that the very teachers who for years had been deemed most successful were proved most unfaithful, and those who had been most blamed turned out most worthy. He made a close scientific investigation of the laws of ventilation, and procured them to be applied to the Public

Schools. He studied the anatomy of the human form to find out just what kind of support the spine of youth required in its sedentary attitude, and invented school-chairs and other furniture since universally adopted."*

"He taught the children," says his friend, George Trimble, "how they should sit, stand, and walk; how to hold and use their books; how to *sweep;* doing his best for them for whom his love was unbounded."†

He also taught them how to hold their books, and how to turn over the leaves. Some of our eminent preachers and lecturers, who still adhere to the old practice of the wetted thumb, might have profited by his lessons. Mr. Curtis's labors were not sinecures. He had some difficulty in overcoming the opposition to the

* Dr. Bellows.

† To the few of our readers who do not know the worth of George Trimble's testimony, we may be permitted to say that he is, according to the strictest sect of his religion, a "Friend"—one of those who allow themselves no more decoration or extravagance in words than in dress.

introduction of slate-sponges into the schools. The conservatives contended for the old usage, for dependence on personal resources, the saliva and the palm of the hand. But the sponges carried it over their heads, and helped to form a habit of cleanliness in thousands of children. Joseph Curtis was a strict economist, but in his estimation it was a miserable economy that would sacrifice the cultivation of the important habit of cleanliness to the sordid saving of a few hundred dollars.

His teaching was after the good old manner of parable and maxim. When his maxims were communicated, he expounded them by a pithy exhortation. He distributed rules of manners, printed on a small bit of paper. We have before us the following examples:

"My son, never sit while a lady is standing, nor a man, if he is older than yourself.

"Never accept a seat without giving an expression of thanks by word or sign."

"Order is Heaven's first law;" so said the poet, and to Joseph Curtis the world was very

unheavenly without it. He continually exhorted the children on this point. He thought nothing too trifling to be noticed: children meeting children were always to pass to the right. "The right, as in all military and civil organizations, was the head." He introduced many mechanical contrivances to facilitate order in the schools. He provided "*a place for every thing*," *and insisted that every thing should be kept in its place;* and this rule was held up to the children as next to the golden one. This was of incalculable benefit to children who, for the most part, came from homes where they had not received the first idea of order. He was fond of telling them anecdotes to illustrate the worth of this virtue by the want of it, and there was one which some of our young friends may still remember. It was an occurrence in the life of an acquaintance of Mr. Curtis, and at his request it was written down (somewhat amplified) by the writer of this memoir. We feel sure it will give pleasure to those of our young friends who heard it from

the lips of Mr. Curtis to recall it; we therefore give it at length.

John Leake and the Pail of Water.

John Leake lived in the neighborhood of Mr. Curtis's Connecticut home. Order was not Leake's first law, nor his last. Though he was a good-natured, easy-tempered, obliging man, there was no one whom his neighbors so much dreaded seeing approach their homes. "There comes Leake to borrow something," they would say, and hoe, hammer, or rake were grudgingly lent, for they were certain that Leake would lose or forget the article, or, at best, return it minus a handle. A story went the rounds that Leake's next neighbor, out of patience, said to him, "Yes, take the hoe; but you must use it only in my corn-field." Time went on, and Leake's affairs ran down, as slack men's will, and he decided to pull up stakes and move to Vermont, then a tract of unsettled and productive land, and called the "new state." Leake's Connecticut friends gathered about the great

wagon in which his battered household goods, and his wife and children were packed, and sorry they were, at the last, to part with him; they now forgot his teasing faults, and felt only that he was a cheerful, kind-hearted fellow.

Rustic tokens of good-will were offered at parting. The best of these was a bright new axe, with a strong helve, on which the giver's name and John's were both carved and painted, and tied together with a true-lover's knot—an odd flourish for an axe-helve. "Take care of this, John," said Uncle Ben, the giver, "and it will be better than gold to you in the new state." The axe fulfilled its mission; it did prove of more value to Leake than a world full of gold.

"No offense, John," said another neighbor, taking a card from his pocket; "here is something that, if you will tack it up over your fireplace and take heed to it, will be sure to make you a forehanded man in the new state." Leake looked at the writing on the card. It was the good old household rule: "A time for

every thing, and every thing in its time; a place for every thing, and every thing in its place." Leake read it aloud, and then the good-natured fellow said, chuckling, "Thank'e, neighbor; it's a pretty smart rod, but it sha'n't fall on a fool's back. I'll take care of it;" and he deposited it in the crown of his hat, his usual place of safe-keeping. "There it goes," said the giver to one of the by-standers; "that's the last of it. Poor Leake! You can't teach an old dog new tricks." When the movers halted that day for their nooning, the very first time John took his hat off he dropped out Uncle Ben's card without perceiving it. His son, Lyman Leake, did see it. Lyman, a lad of ten or eleven, was the very opposite of his father, made so, probably, by the same influence that makes the "light-heeled daughter of the heavy-heeled mother." Some parents are examples; some, alas! are beacons. Lyman picked up the card, and probably thinking, "Father will never miss it, and never, never take care of it," he slipped it into his own little

leathern purse, which had also been given him for a parting token.

Lyman was to learn, by a hard experience, the worth of the words written on that card. A due observance of them through a life-time would give a large figure in money results, besides a world of comfort.

The little family arrived, after some mishaps (to be expected), such as losing their whip, leaving their halters and their water-pail at a brook, etc., at their lodge in a vast wilderness. But in two years they got well ahead, in spite of Leake's destructive and obstructive habits, for he was a hard-working fellow. Fields were cleared and tilled around him; he had built a small framed house adjoining the log hut; neighbors had come in at no great distance, and a village was growing up not far from him.

In spite of good advice, he had connected a wood-house and stable with his house. "Take care, Leake," said a friend to him; "it needs a careful man to build so. A fire in winter up

in this cold country is something dreadful: it's like gunpowder—a flash, and all is gone."

"Oh, never fear," said Leake; "I have had my portion of ill fortune in this world; my luck has turned." (Mr. Curtis often impressed on the children that what shiftless people call ill fortune and bad luck is but the inevitable consequence of their own imprudence or carelessness.)

It was during the third winter of the Leakes' residence in their new home that, just at the close of a short winter's day, the merry tinkling of sleigh-bells was heard, and the creaking of the runners on the hard-frozen snow, and a little *cutter* (a single sleigh) stopped at Leake's. It was expected; the door opened, and shouts of joy followed, and glad greetings of "uncle," and "aunt," and "cousins." "Uncle Ben" and his family had come from Connecticut to make a long-promised visit. When supper was ended, the card bearing the domestic axiom caught Uncle Ben's eye. It was nailed to the wall over the mantle-piece. "I

declare!" he exclaimed; "well, I never expected to see that bit of pasteboard again. I give you a credit-mark for preserving that, John." "You must give that credit-mark to Lyman, brother; he preserved the card; but you may give me one for teaching him care." Uncle Ben smiled. "Yes," he said, "you have taught him, John, but wrong end foremost—wrong end foremost."

The evening passed off delightfully. The unstinted fire of a new country burned brightly. A basket of fine apples from the old "home-orchard in Connecticut" was unpacked, and nuts were cracked and eaten. The elders talked about old times. Leake gave the history of his toils on his new farm, and his successes. He told (he had some right to boast, for he had worked diligently) how much land he had cleared, what crops he had raised, and concluded with, "My barn is full; I have plenty of wheat, and corn, and oats in the loft over my wood-house; and pork in my cellar; and my wife has taken care of the trinkets—butter,

and apple-sauce, and pickles, and the like;" and he ended his boast of rural riches with saying, "I guess, Ben, my old neighbors could not twit me now."

"Your old neighbors, John, always knew you for an honest, hard-working man; it was only your careless ways, your want of order, that troubled us. You know I used to tell you that if you put ever so much meal into a bag with a hole in it, it would run away."

"Yes, yes, I know; and just so Lyman talks now. Among you, you put an old head on his young shoulders." And thus the elders talked, and the youngsters had their pleasure; the visitors telling the wonders of jugglers, and wax-work shows, and delights incident to their down country advanced civilization; and the "new state" children relating adventures with bears and wild-cats, and their own personal concerns with taming squirrels and catching rabbits; and, finally, the evening closed with a game of "forfeits," in which Lyman, having been sentenced to the common penalty of

"bowing to the prettiest, kneeling to the wittiest, and kissing the one he loved best," declared that all these dues were to his Cousin Sally. His Cousin Sally protested and resisted; the girls all joined her, and, after a laughing scramble together, Lyman's oldest sister caught up a candle, called "Cousin Sally" to follow her, and they made good their escape to the bed-room, and bolted Lyman out. Lyman retreated; the evening was far advanced, and the Leakes and their guests separated for the night, but not till after Lyman performed a duty that had been postponed by his uncle's arrival. While his mother, "on hospitable thoughts intent," was preparing her little affairs for the morning's breakfast, Lyman went to the wood-house to split kindlings for the morning's fires; and, having finished, he could not resist the temptation of showing his well-preserved axe to his Uncle Ben. "The boy is a fool about that axe," said his father; "if it was made of a wedge of gold he could not be more choice of it; he even hides it away

from me that gave it to him." Lyman looked at his uncle with a quiet smile. "Come, come, Lyman," said his father, "there's reason in the roasting of eggs: throw your axe in here for to-night." He opened the door of a little closet next the fire-place. "Don't go clear back to the wood-house this cold night." "A place for every thing, and every thing in its place," replied Lyman, and the axe was returned to the wood-house. "Now that's what I call superstitious," said the father, while he took from the open closet a splinter-broom to sweep up the widespread coals of the fire he had just raked. Jast as he was finishing his wife called to him from the kitchen, and, *hastily throwing the broom into the closet*, he went to her. "John," she said, "there's no water in the house."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, you know, I never like to go to bed without a pail of water at hand."

"I know that is one of your superstitions." (John Leake, in spite of all his experience, per-

sisted in looking upon the provisions of foresight as "superstitions.") "Let it go, just for this one night, wife; it's dark, and biting cold, and the way up to the well all shod with glare ice."

"'Tis bad," said his wife, meekly, and urged no more; but, as she looked wistfully at the empty pail, she thought, if they should chance to want water in the night, it would not be any better getting it, and an anxious sigh escaped her. "Coming events" do sometimes seem "to cast their shadows before."

The family were soon all in bed, and in their first sleep, the profoundest of the night; but there is no sleep from which a mother can not be awakened by a restless child, and about one o'clock Mrs. Leake was roused from hers by the nestling of her baby. She instantly wakened her husband with, "John, do get up, and see where this smoke comes from; the room is full of it." Their bed-room was off the sitting-room; the door was open into it, and the moment Leake raised his head he saw a bright

light shining through the crevices of the closet-door into which he had thrown the splinter-broom. Some small coals had adhered to the broom when John swept the hearth, but, shut in the closet with very little air, they had been slow in kindling; but now they had kindled thoroughly, and when Leake sprang to the closet-door and opened it the broom was in a lighted blaze, and the heated partition had taken fire. John seized the broom and threw it in the fire-place, and at that moment the fire had made so little progress that a single pail of water at hand would have extinguished it.

"Oh, *the pail of water!*" shrieked Mrs. Leake. Leake thought with anguish of the empty pail, rushed to the kitchen for it, and rushed to the well. The ground was descending to the house, and, as he had said, "slippery as glass," and Leake fell. Again he let the bucket down to the deep well and filled his pail, and reached the house with it, but the air had rushed in through the open door and blown up the fire like a furnace bellows. It would not now have

felt twenty pails of water. The smoke filled the whole house, and the crackling of the fire and the outcries of John and his wife had awakened the whole family, who now came out—all excepting the two girls, who had bolted themselves into the little bed-room, had talked together late into the night, and were now sleeping on in spite of all the mischief, danger, and misery about them. Lyman rushed through an outer room filled to suffocation with smoke, and shrieked, "Anne! Sally! fire! fire!" There was no answer. In vain he banged against the door: it was too securely bolted. Quick as thought, he sprang to a window communicating with the wood-house, passed through it, and in a moment returned with his axe. The smoke had become fire—the room was blazing. But, with Heaven's help and blessing (he said he could not—he could not possibly have done it alone), in a breath the door was battered down, and in another breath the girls jumped from the window *unharmed*, followed by Lyman.

The rapid consumption of a wooden house in the country, in a cold, gusty night, can scarcely be conceived of by those who have not witnessed it. There was but just time to extricate the horses and cattle from the stable when that, as well as the house and woodhouse, was enveloped in flames. All, as Leake's neighbor had forewarned him, went together, and in one mass of ashes lay the labor of many months—the dear old furniture of the Connecticut home, all the children's pretty things, fond memorials and precious keepsakes that no toil, no art, no kindness could make good to them. "And all this dreadful loss," as Mr. Curtis would repeat to his listeners in the school, "for the want of a *pail of water* in the right place. And life saved by the axe being in the 'right place,' instead of having been thrown into the closet, as Leake proposed, beside the broom, by the careless use of which all the harm was done."

Mr. Curtis first suggested the fundamental ideas of that excellent little book which has been of such service in the Public Schools, "Conversations on Common Things," and we believe it was written at his request.

He has left a sort of manual, which illustrates, in his simple, practical style, his ideas of the best mode of teaching in the Primary Schools. He did not receive his notions from theories in books; they were the result of his own wisdom and observation.

Some of the children still in the schools will remember how often, while they were in the Primary Schools, and yet in ignorance of the rudiments instilled there, they have stood in a semicircle before the black-board, and, with their eyes turning eagerly from that to the dear teacher, they have received a lesson similar to the following, which we transfer from Mr. Curtis's manuscript:

"After the word *Cat* has been given out by the teacher, and the class have each written it, he asks, 'What word is this?' The class an-

swer, 'Cat.' Teacher. 'Now spell it.' They spell it. 'Yes, this is the way to spell cat. Now you can spell cat, and write it too. A cat, you know, is an animal, and it is called a domestic animal because it stays in the house with people. It has four legs. All four-legged animals are quadrupeds. It catches mice and rats, and eats them. Most little girls like to have a kitten to play with. A kitten, you know, is a young cat. Little boys are sometimes pleased with kittens; they like to see them play. I have known some boys that tease and hurt cats; now this is not right. I have heard of a little boy who had been sick, and when he was getting better he wanted to play with a cat, and he whipped and abused the cat, and made it cry; and then it would run away from the boy; and then he would cry because the cat would not stay with him, and let him do as he had a mind to. His mother would go and get the cat, and bring it to him in the bed, and make it lie still; and he would then pull the cat's ears, and hair, and

tail. One day, when the boy's mother was out of the room, and nobody was in the room but the boy and the cat, and he was hurting the cat very much, she bit the boy, and scratched him in his face and eyes till the boy was very bloody. He cried and halloed as loud as he could till his mother came. She saw the cat tearing the boy dreadfully, and as soon as the cat saw the mother she jumped off the bed and ran out of the house, and never returned. (Sensible cat!) The mother said she would have the cat killed; but the father, when he came and saw how fearfully the poor boy was scratched, said he hoped the cat would not come back again, but if she did he would not have her killed, for if his boy had let the cat alone she would not have hurt him." Here was a lesson in morals appended to the idea the pupil had acquired of *cat*—justice and mercy both inculcated.

Another example of the word *not* is given, and concludes with this illustration: "You use this word when your mother sends you of an

errand, and you tell her you will *not* stop by the way; or when you promise that you will *not* tell a falsehood—a story."

The word *snow* being spelled and defined in the usual way, he says, "Now for the formation of snow, which comes from the clouds—but what are clouds made of? (so here we must stop to talk about clouds); and when we find that clouds are made of a material that will make snow, we shall more readily understand how snow is formed; so let us inquire and see if we can understand how clouds are formed. You may remember that last Monday morning when you came to school it was very foggy. You could not see a church steeple any farther than one square; and if you were on the wharf, you could not see more than half across the river. The fog was so thick that the man that steered the ferry-boat could not see the land, and he was afraid the boat would run against the wharf and break to pieces. Now, you know, fog is damp—sometimes so damp that your clothes are wet with

it. This fog is a cloud that you have been in; all clouds are nothing more nor less than fog. This fog is floating in the air, and sometimes rises very high—high enough to make ice; so the fog freezes into fine ice—fine ice crystals. These crystals are heavier than what is not frozen, and they descend toward the earth and unite with other crystals, and two are heavier than one, and as they descend they unite with others; and by the time they have passed through the cloud, they have come to the size we see them when they light on the earth.

"You have all seen, and felt, and handled snow. Do you not think the falling snow one of the most beautiful sights you ever looked at—these light flakes, pure white, gently descending? And when the storm is over, and the sun is shining on the ground and houses with this light covering of pure white, is it not beautiful? Very beautiful." Thus Mr. Curtis formed in the children the habit of the observation of the phenomena of Nature, and gently insinuated into their minds a feeling of their beauty—an

inestimable blessing. God gives alike to the poor and rich the ever-vaying spectacle of Nature. Each day the world is adorned with pictures from which the changing light brings out, at every moment, a new form and a new beauty. What a boon is conferred by educating the eye to observe, and thus to minister to the delicate sense of beauty!

After one day's lesson, Mr. Curtis says to his class, gently condescending to their stage of knowledge, "Now have *we* not learned something to-day? What an easy matter it is to learn! Yes, and an easy matter to forget what we have learned; and that you may not forget, you must talk about what you have learned out of school. When you go home you must tell your mother or some one else about it, and if you have forgotten, come to me and I will tell you over again. About a year ago Dr. Samuel Mitchill, a very learned man, lived in White Street. He was a very remarkable man. He read a great many books, and observed a great many things; and he often said to his

friends that his much reading and thinking would have done him little good if he had not talked about them. 'After I have told a story,' he said, 'I do not forget it.'"

It has been seen in the example of the "cat" how Mr. Curtis moulded a moral into his instruction. This he considered its leaven, and it was truly a leaven, for it imparted vitality to the whole lesson, and could not be dissociated from it. It gave him the most serious concern to observe how much, in all our schools, the intellectual instruction was in advance of the moral. "These children understand thoroughly the rules of arithmetic," he has been heard to say when they were demonstrating their attainments; "if their hearts were as well impressed with the golden rule, what might they not do for their generation!"

As on the teachers mainly depended the prosperity of the schools, Mr. Curtis was a close observer of them, and one who knew him well

could pretty accurately graduate their deserts by the grave demeanor or kindly smile with which he greeted them. He reverenced the office of a teacher as it deserves to be reverenced, and for no human dignity did he feel an equal respect, whether the teacher were in the pulpit or the school. No excellence in the teachers of our Public Schools escaped his watchful eye, nor a tribute from his grateful heart; no error of commission or omission passed unobserved.

It was a pleasure to accompany him in his visits to the schools; there he was at home. His greeting of the bright young women at the desk was like the blessing of a father. He had the freedom of their recesses, and with a smile, understood by all parties, he would open their drawers, take out their record-books, and examine them. Nothing escaped him, and nothing called forth such grave questions as the infliction of corporal punishment. He surely had a right to question its efficacy who had successfully governed the hardened subjects of the

House of Refuge with rare and slight recourse to it. It was permitted in the schools, but no instance of its use that came under Mr. Curtis's cognizance passed without investigation and comment. It was, he thought, the "short and easy mode" for the teacher, but effected no permanent good to the pupil. It might produce external obedience, but no amendment of the heart. It was like cutting off the inconvenient sprouts of a noxious weed without eradicating its roots.

In Mr. Curtis's opinion, female teachers were to be preferred, without exception, for the Primary Schools for both sexes, and for all the schools so soon as their education reached the point of qualification for teaching the higher classes. He believed their natural mental ability equal to that of the males, and their influfluence on the morals and manners of the pupils far superior.

> "Women know the way to rear up children;
> They know a simple, merry, tender knack;"

a "knack" of softening with their gentler ele-

ment the masculine roughness; a "knack" at detecting and developing the feelings, at moulding the temper, and anticipating the wants of children. This knack springs from the instinct of maternal love, the quickening principle, the all-embracing force.

In support of Mr. Curtis's opinion on this important subject, it must be remembered that the children of our Public Schools come, for the most part, from coarse homes and vulgar associates, from fireside disputes and street-fights, and such need the example of female refinement, and the patience of female detail to tame and civilize them. They demand a far different training from the unchristian fagging and ring-fights that seem to be deemed essential to make men of the English aristocracy.

Mr. Curtis considered the disparity between the salaries of male and female teachers an obvious injustice.

We quote his opinions on these points as deserving the profoundest respect. No man had a more acute observation or *so much experience.*

He was a wise man, and of the soundest judgment. The following extracts from a letter written by a gentleman (Mr. Seton) officially connected with the Public Schools, for a long series of years their superintendent, we insert, as, besides its great interest, it more than substantiates all we claim for Mr. Curtis. "Seeing is believing." Mr. Seton has recorded, in the generous spirit of friendship, what he saw and knew.

"We miss," says Mr. Seton, "his careful hand, his useful counsels, and his cheerful spirits. His activity was surprising, always planning and effecting the comfort and welfare of his fellow-men. Through life's warfare I always saw him calm and tranquil; when the least otherwise, it flowed from his earnestness of spirit and zeal in the cause of education. His humility would sometimes lead him to deem himself '*deficient*,' but he had peculiar and fitting requisites to promote the progress of primary education. His stores of knowledge of little things, and treasury of common

sense, and practical experience of the affairs of life, gotten by habits of close observation, with a retentive memory, made him feel ready for the work to which he gave so many years of *love* and *care*. I forward you a single document, one of many his diligent hand has voluntarily prepared. It is a report on the use of the libraries of the Public Schools. It contains more than ten thousand figures. The examination of the numerous papers from which the items are obtained of course give great increase of labor to the preparation of so complete a statistic table. Such was prepared every six months by the same hand, with patient and untiring zeal."*

* In addition to this laborious document, there were others "prepared," Mr. Seton says, "for many years by our friend: accounts of fuel and of other supplies; of the comparative state of the schools at examination. These papers were vastly beneficial as guides to future operations. He had these papers of twelve years pasted together for a comparative view. A printed copy of all would have covered ten feet by eight. The memorandums, the labor of his own hand, were twice that size. It is a monster product of gen-

(This "statistic" was made from records kept —at Mr. Curtis's suggestion—by each Public School of the number of times each book was drawn out and read during the term. This was not only to test the acceptance of the books by the young readers, and their preferences, but the vigilance of the teachers over this important department of instruction.) "His punctuality was proverbial. No committee ever *waited* for *him*, and he was always ready to take the *heaviest* portion of the work. I have known him to attend successive meetings for twelve consecutive hours, from nine A.M. to nine P.M., with no other refreshment than bread and cheese. His humane endeavors to lessen the amount of human suffering were conspicuous. He was ever contriving mechanical improvements in furniture, etc., to promote health, convenience, and comfort. We are indebted to him for many improvements in ven-

tle patience, of voluntary labor—a brave testimony of philanthropy." And let it be always remembered that this was, as Mr. Seton says, "voluntary" and unpaid labor.

tilation and school furniture, always having in view the better physical training of the pupils. He was ever thoughtful for the comfort and safety of the little ones, seeing that fixtures were well secured, and that there were balusters every where to the stairways.* By his advocacy and influence he greatly lessened the amount of corporal punishment in the schools, and succeeded in abolishing it for years in some of them. That maternal sympathies might be with the children, and corporal punishment lessened, he advocated and strongly urged, and successfully, the introduction of female teachers into the boys' schools.

"In our Public Schools he was a member of the Board and of the Executive Committee,

* Some years since a terrible accident occurred in one of the Public Schools. There was a cry of fire and a panic in a school-room. The children rushed out pellmell to the stairway. A crazed rack of a banister, about which Mr. Curtis had repeatedly remonstrated, gave way, and the children were precipitated into the area below. Seventy were killed, and many others mutilated. This was to Mr. Curtis like a tragedy in his own family.

and constantly serving on special committees, and always kept faithfully in mind the appointed seasons requiring special attention in the operations of the schools. His personal attention was great, and his visits were numerous, amounting, probably, to from ten to twelve hundred a year.

"In the winter season he visited at early hours, before school-opening, to detect any neglect of duty in preparing for the reception of the pupils by proper warmth, ventilation, and cleanliness. His care and diligence amounted to drudgery; want of fuel, a broken lock or pane of glass, or clearing off of snow, were promptly and personally directed and attended to. He entered into the service with heart and mind, always watchful for the personal welfare and moral interests of pupils and teachers.

"In his little talks and addresses to the schools he promoted good manners, kind feelings, and every good habit. The influence of his useful maxims and precepts will be long traced among us."

We can not fear wearying our readers by reiterating the testimony to Mr. Curtis's thorough work. "There were each year," says Miss Curtis, "semiannual examinations of the Public Schools, requiring from five to six weeks each, occupying from four to five days each week, and no less than six hours each day. My father scrupulously arranged his business so as to attend every school examination. He was chairman of Primary Schools, and of the stove and fuel committee."

In order to secure as much economy as could be attained in the consumption of fuel, he required returns from each teacher of the amount used, and from these graduated the quantity required. "My father," says Miss Curtis, "was always busy about some school matter, and never tired. The day his name is not registered in some one of the trustees' visiting-books would be worthy of note. Every Evening School was visited in order and addressed by him. He performed this duty up to the evening preceding his last illness" (six days before

his death). "I sometimes remonstrated. He would answer, 'I feel equal to it now; I may not another time.' He always worked, lest the night should find him with duties unperformed. His services (she continues, in answer to an inquiry in that regard) were not only gratuitous, but cost him many dollars. He never had even his stationery from the society. I am glad he used *his* money liberally among schools and teachers. I have found several memorandums of five, ten, twenty dollars 'loaned to Miss So-and-so, because salary this year is small.' Some were never repaid."

It was well said by one who did not speak without reckoning, "More than a million children have known and loved Joseph Curtis. What a crowd of witnesses to the worth of any man!"

The services he rendered to the city of New York are inestimable, and illimitable in their consequences, and yet how few among our richest, and greatest, and "first citizens" (so styled) thanked him for them, or were even

aware of them. "Was he so long time with you (we say it without irreverence), and yet ye have not known him?" This old man, nobler in his purposes, and more successful in their execution than the general who leads an army to victory, or the eloquent statesman who commands, for his brief hour, the eye and ear of thousands, issued daily from the vineyards of his Lord, and quietly passed along the crowded street unheralded, unnoticed, except perhaps by some luckless child, whom he would take up in his arms and comfort, or some little brawlers whom he reconciled.

But he neither sought nor desired notoriety or glorification. If a crown were decreed to him, he would have hidden it under an impenetrable veil of modesty. His place of recompense is with the Howards and the Oberlyns, and his reward shall be from Him who knows "his works, and charity, and service, and faith, and patience."

We have made but a frail and simple record of Joseph Curtis's worth. The parents of our

city should erect an enduring memorial to him —a statue in marble or bronze—to which the grateful children of his care should point, and, reiterating their own words, say, "*Do you know him? I do.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSE OF LIFE.

"And the end thereof is peace."

Mr. Curtis's diligence and skill in his business affairs, and the system and *order* with which he arranged all his life, saved a great amount of time, and allowed him to indulge in his favorite pleasures. First and foremost of these was his devotion to the Public Schools. In this luxury he indulged: this was the filling up of his life—of all that was not of necessity devoted to gaining the grosser elements by which the mortal nature is sustained.

After the dissolution of the house in John Street, he was employed for two or three years in building "Avery's Rotary Steam-engines," and introducing them into use.

After this he held a respectable station in

the Custom House.* His last business, in the common acceptation of that term, was as "Inspector of Steam-boats and Boilers."

Mr. Curtis's natural taste for mechanics (we quote from Dr. Bellows's sermon), and the knowledge of steam he had perfected in the Allaire Works, made him a natural candidate for this office, created by an act of 1847. This office he filled with fidelity and success. His knowledge, and his interest in every thing connected with the progress, safety, comfort, and pride of steam navigation, made him the companion, friend, and adviser of all persons in the neighborhood connected with that business.

The labor and discomforts of this business required all Mr. Curtis's elasticity and perse-

* In this connection we are happy to note a rare exception to the common course of politicians and office-holders. The late Edward Curtis, Esq. (not a relative or even an acquaintance of Joseph Curtis), then collector, appointed him to this office upon the statement of a mutual friend of his qualifications and desert, accompanied with the confession that he had no political claim, and was never a partisan of any party.

verance, and would have daunted, at the age of sixty-seven, a spirit less brave and patient than his. He retained it for six years, and thoroughly performed its duties. He might be seen, at given hours of every day, invested in his India-rubber dress, equipped for the work, entering the interior of boilers. But this was not the hardest part of his work. In the beginning he had to contend with the jealousies and mean cavils of steam-boat proprietors and commanders. They had been too long accustomed to using steam without a scrupulous regard to the capacity of their vessels to brook interference and control, even though authorized by legislative enactment; and at first, insults and injuries were heaped upon our patient friend, but his inflexible justice, his firmness and gentleness, obtained for him the complete mastery. His good overcame their evil; and we have heard him say, "They are all friendly to me now that they know I mean only to do my duty, and that I will do *that*."

Though he never complained of this disa-

greeable labor, and, so far from shrinking from it, performed it with alacrity, always doing more than was required of him, yet, when he was released from it in 1853, he enjoyed his emancipation. The last three years of his life were a holiday, filled with occupation for his darling object, the schools. But this occupation, though we believe it laid up much treasure for him in Heaven, gave no money return.

Mr. Curtis's only son had just returned from California with a large fortune, acquired by his intelligent industry in the important business of assaying. His well-known liberality in all the relations of life was, toward his father, stimulated by filial fidelity, love, and reverence, and he wished at once to make pecuniary arrangements that would place him beyond the casualties of life; but the old man was a Spartan in his simplicity and in his love of independence, and he insisted upon such an arrangement of his small means as to ultimately secure to his son a complete indemnification for all the advances made for him; and we

know that it was a pleasant thought to him on his death-bed that he owed no man, not even the dear son who would have delighted to share his prosperity with him.

The succeeding years were a beautiful twilight to his long serene day; and as in the natural twilight the flowers exhale delicious odors, so was his passing day made sweet by the fruits of his life; and as for the future, his hopes were anchored on the sure promises of God.

He was quite free from the repinings and petulance of old age: they arise partly from the uncomfortable consciousness of decaying powers, but more from well-grounded self-dissatisfactions.

Joseph Curtis never boasted, never even expressed self-approval, but he enjoyed the peace of the faithful man. If he had any qualities conspicuous above his other virtues, they were his modesty and humility. They were the more striking, not being, *par excellence*, the graces of philanthropists. They live in the world's eye, and are pampered by its praise,

and their weakness is at the point of vanity and vainglory. After a long and intimate intercourse with him, we can say that we never heard him boast of any thing he had done, or even advert to his sacrifices for the Manumission Society, to his great work at the House of Refuge, to his care of his apprentices, to his devotion to the schools, or to any one or all of his good deeds as reflecting any merit on himself, and no man recognized with a more generous appreciation the well-doing of others. He not only did not seek renown, but he avoided notoriety. He was quiet in all his ways. His good works were as silently performed as the underground processes of Nature, and as beneficent as the dews of heaven. We believe there are few of his fellow-citizens that are aware how much they owe to him of the improvements in their sewerage, their fire department,* and the ventilation of

* "He invented the *trap* that is the plumbers' great agent in keeping nauseous fumes from our domestic waste-pipes and public sewers. He invented and carried the first

their public buildings. And who shall reckon the value of his services for the young? and where is its limit?

Among his most intimate and dearest friends, the friend of many years, was the benefactor of our city, Peter Cooper. In a letter in relation to Joseph Curtis he says, "I wish it was in my power to give you a description of his untiring devotion to all the great interests of humanity. To do this, it would be necessary to follow him through a life of efforts to aid almost every benevolent enterprise calculated to elevate and better the condition of the present, but more particularly the rising generation. I regard him as the best and truest pattern of a perfect man that it has ever fallen to my lot to know." This is a fit concurrent testimony to the brief history of his life.

torch that lighted firemen on their perilous way to the succor of burning homes. He was engaged almost to the last hour of his life in devising a method, which bids fair to be successful, for curing the inhuman slipperiness of our Russ pavement, whose cruelty to beasts had moved his tender heart."—*Dr. Bellows's Sermon.*

Soon after his release from business, Mr. Curtis celebrated his "golden wedding," the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage. This observance, which has now become common among us, was first introduced by a passage in one of Miss Bremer's popular novels describing this celebration, which is a sort of institution in Germany. Never was it observed under more fitting auspices than in Mr. Curtis's house. Both he and his bride of fifty years were in the very excellence and beauty of old age. The unstinted vows of their bridal-day had been faithfully kept. Their children and grandchildren "arose up and called them blessed;" brothers and sisters were still alive to greet them; grateful nephews and nieces, to the number of forty, and unnumbered friends, were gathered around them, with wreaths and bouquets of white, spotless flowers, the fitting emblems of their lives; and their beloved pastor was with them to offer his prayers and thanksgiving. The rays of Divine acceptance seemed falling on human lives.

The following lines were found with Mr. Curtis's will. Miss Curtis says her father had no habit of versification, and probably adopted them from their consonance to his state of mind. They are artless lines, and, we are inclined to believe, were composed by himself. They not only express his views of life's work, but all who have read our memoir will see that his life was a verification of their prayer.

"Let me not die before I've done for Thee
My earthly work, whatever it may be;
Call me not hence with mission unfulfilled;
Let me not leave my space of ground untilled.
Impress this truth upon me, that *not one*
Can do my portion that I leave undone;
For each one in Thy vineyards hath a spot
To labor in for life, and weary not.
Then give me strength all faithfully to toil,
Converting barren earth to fruitful soil.
Yet most I want a spirit of *content*,
To work where'er thou'lt wish my labor spent.
I want a spirit passive, to be still,
And by Thy power to do Thy holy will.
Oh, make me useful in this world of thine,
In ways according to Thy will, not mine."

The prayer granted and the work done, it was time for the faithful servant to pass on to a higher service.

On Monday morning, April 6th, 1856, the last time Mr. Curtis left his house, he went to see the launch of the Adriatic. It is pleasant to remember, as a proof of the continued enjoyment of his life to its latest period, how cheerfully and gratefully he spoke to the writer of this memoir (whom he visited on his way to the launch) of his perfect health. I may be permitted, also, without wounding the modesty of the living, to record here the last expression I heard from him. It is the due of filial piety. He turned after he got to the door, and said, "I want to tell you what a blessing —— (his single daughter) is to me;" his face was all aglow. "She is every thing I could ask—more, every thing I could desire." No daughter can be much pitied for what she misses who thus remains "the angel of her father's house."*

* Let no one imagine that if this daughter was "loved

Mr. Curtis had an enjoyment in the success of steam navigation akin to personal gratification. He was an early friend of Robert Fulton, and had adhered to him, and steadily believed in his success, when his projects were derided as schemes by those who believe only in what has been—the loyal adherents to the past. The launch of a fine steamer was a jubilee to him—like going to the wedding of a friend. The launch of the Adriatic was his last jubilee in this world.

He returned from it severely ill with what seemed an acute disease, from which he might be soon relieved by medical skill. On Tuesday he was partially relieved, and on Wednesday he alone of all his family knew the disease was not removed. That night he talked incessantly in his dreams. His imaginings were characteristic. He was in the schools addressing the teachers and talking to the children. Occasionally awaking, and looking up benignly

more," the others were "loved less." Hers was an undivided duty.

to the faithful child who was watching every breath he drew, he would say, "Well, I have been dreaming very pleasantly. Do go to bed, my daughter." On Thursday, though he seemed better, he detected on the faces of his friends their continued anxiety. "Daughter," he said to Miss Curtis, "you are anxious." She tried to evade the truth. "I *know* you are," he persisted; "now, my child, be quiet. If God calls me, I am ready. You will take care of mother; we shall all soon meet again."

After this he was delirious at intervals, but even in his delirium he was himself—reasonable, dignified, and gentle. Once his daughter found it necessary to restrain him. "You *must not*, father," she said. He fixed his eye on her with an expression of calm rebuke, and said, "Do you know to whom you are speaking? Are you not ashamed, my daughter?" Miss Curtis, in relating this, said, "I was ashamed;" so stringent was the love by which he governed, so spontaneous her submission to his authority, so instinctive her reverence for

him. Even in his wanderings, during the two last days of his illness, he manifested his characteristic candor and self-control. The fixtures in his room appeared to him disturbed and in violent motion; and when told they did not move, he said, "Put a pin below that picture, and see if it does not push it down." The pin was placed. He watched it, saw it did not move, and said at once, "I give it up; I see something is wrong here," putting his hand to his head. A powerful narcotic, on Thursday night, procured for him a long sleep, and he awoke on Friday morning with his head clear and his spirit calm. He looked around him with a smile. A faithful servant could not ask for other or happier circumstances in which to close the day of his earthly labor, and pass the threshold into his Father's house. He was in his own home, a home sanctified by domestic love and peace, and the heart's daily worship of the true God. The wife of his youth, the loved and honored companion of his lifetime, was beside him. His only son, his son's

wife, all his daughters, were gathered about him, banded together by filial and mutual love. He looked around with a radiant smile. "Dear mother, you here?" he said; "and you? and you?" he continued, tenderly pronouncing the name of each. "This *is* a blessing; and in my own room, too. God *is* good. Why, my beloved, are you weeping?" They replied by expressing their joy that he was better. "Yes, children, I feel well," he said; "but what matters it if I go home soon, surrounded by so many dear ones?" They were alarmed by his weakness, and begged him to be quiet. He knew that his time was nearly out, and replied, "Let me talk, and tell you Heaven is love; and here is love; if I go, will you not love one another?"

"Yes, dear father," was the reply; "but will you not stay with us?"

"Perhaps so, children; but I am ready, if God wills."

One of his dear friends, a child of his heart's adoption, watched with him the following night

—the last night. Mr. Curtis said to him, "If I should never rise from this bed, remember that I loved you. I know you will have a care for those I leave. I feel no sorrow in dying but the grief it will give my children. I believe in God; His promise is sure."

After this his mind occasionally wandered, but his mental eye was fixed on the light that beamed from his Father's house. He repeated texts fraught with promise and love, such as, "In my Father's house are many mansions," etc.; "Feed my sheep;" "Little children, love one another."

On Saturday he recognized each member of his family. To his physician he said, "You have done all you can; I am satisfied;" and to his children he reiterated the simple declarations of his love, and his last tender care for them. "My children, will you love one another? I leave you only love.

"You may be asked, my children," he said, "what sect your father was of. Tell them I was of no sect, and that my religion may be

found in the eighth verse of the sixth chapter of Micah." He then repeated the words in a low but unfaltering tone: "'He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' I have fallen short," he added, "but I have faith to hope all will be forgiven." At nine o'clock on the evening of that Saturday his spirit passed on.

"I heard a voice saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

As this memoir of Joseph Curtis has been written mainly to preserve him in the grateful remembrance of the children he loved and taught, and to impress his example upon them, we wish specially to call their attention to those qualities that formed the broad foundation of his useful life. *They are attainable by all.*

He was docile, obedient, and reverent in his

childhood; modest and diligent in his youth; self-denying; always frugal in his expenses; at every period of his worldly prosperity living in a simply-furnished house, and dressing with strict economy; both house and person adorned, and adorned only with neatness. His habits were temperate in eating and drinking, strictly adjusted to the laws of health.

Strict truth requires that we make one exception to this statement. In Mr. Curtis's youth chewing tobacco was almost without exception the habit of his cotemporaries, and he acquired it; and, though he used it with extreme moderation, he all his life bitterly lamented its mastery over him. His own experience made him more earnestly protest against it. He never justified, or in any way excused it. He looked upon tobacco in all its shapes as an expensive superfluity, and as an "unclean thing." He warned the schoolboys against it as stimulating the appetite for strong drink, and he lamented, as a misfortune, the countenance given to it by the example of some of the teachers.

All characters have some peculiarities. Mr. Curtis's young friends may ask, "What were his?" "His most striking peculiarity," his pastor well said, "was, that his religious character was his whole character. He had no views which he called religious views, no duties he called his religious duties, no opinions he called his religious opinions. All his views, duties, and opinions were religious. His whole character was devout — God-fearing, God-loving."

Joseph Curtis never, in the technical sense, "belonged to a church." It is probable, from his long attendance with his wife upon the worship of the Friends, and his attachment to Elias Hicks, that he imbibed their belief in regard to the sacraments. We can not otherwise account for his non-observance of the last request of the Master, an omission exceptional to his whole character. On the last Sunday of his life he attended church, as was his uniform custom. There was a communion service,

and as he rose to leave the church, his daughter, oppressed with the unfitness of his going away while she remained to participate the privilege, said imploringly, "Why not stay, father?" "It is not for me," he replied; "I do not require it. To my understanding, I shall eat with Him in my Father's kingdom."

Mr. Curtis worshiped with the Friends till he became acquainted with Dr. Dewey's preaching. That met his wants, and was his Sunday's feast; and from the first time he heard him till Dr. Dewey left his pulpit in New York, we believe he never failed to be in his place in the church of his pastor and friend, for Dr. Dewey soon became his friend, and their friendship, as all true friendships do, grew by what it fed on —mutual respect and affection. In confirmation of this, I am permitted to quote some passages in a letter I received from my friend Dr. Dewey after Mr. Curtis's death.

"Is there not," he says, "something in a man's chosen pursuits, his surroundings, the beings he loves and lives among, that is reflect-

ed in his countenance? for it seems as if the very guilelessness, innocence, and modesty of childhood were reflected in the face of our friend; and it seems, too, as if his unobtrusiveness naturally sought that sphere. Down among the schools, among the children, he could work, and the public need not know or praise it. 'Public!' the word was out of his vocabulary; and yet, if it was down, he knew that it was down among the foundations. His penetrating, practical understanding of things saw that the hope of society lay in the care and training of its children.

"There he took hold. For many years he spent half of his time in unpaid and unofficial labors among the common schools. It was very interesting to visit them in his company, not on 'examination day,' but any day. He was quite as much at home in them as the teachers. He knew every child, I think, and every child seemed to know him. If each school had been his own family, he could hardly have taken more pride or pleasure in it.

He used to ask me to go and see one of them as another man would a gallery of pictures. Well might he take pride and delight in them. During those years the common schools of New York made unexampled progress, coming up with, if not going beyond, Boston itself.

"I would point to this part of Mr. Curtis's life because of its very unobtrusiveness. It is well that society should be reminded of how much is done for it that lies out of sight. There is an immense deal of labor to be done by somebody, and that in more than one department, as you are well aware, of which the world knows little or nothing; but, though the true philanthropist does not care to have his work known, yet the world *should* know and honor it. Philanthropist, I say, and yet I hesitate to apply the title to him. Certainly no man ever had less the air about him of professional philanthropy, or less of a too common extravagance and one-sidedness.

"I remember meeting him one morning in company, and of the party was a gentleman

professing something of this character, perhaps, and who made the observation that the most of the distress of the poor and suffering classes was owing to the injustice and neglect of those above them. I said in reply, 'Here is Mr. Joseph Curtis, who has walked the streets of New York on errands—well, he will not let me say on *good* errands—for twenty years before ever you or I stepped upon them: let us hear what *he* says.' It was amid considerable philanthropic impatience on the other side that I contrived by a series of questions to extract from Mr. Curtis the opinions, successively, 'That the distress of the poor was *not* owing to the rich—that it was owing *mainly* to themselves; that forty-nine fiftieths of all the poor distressed families in the city might, with due exertion and care on the part of all their members, have been free from debt and want, and might always *be* so.'

"What these *annual* rushes of charity for the relief of the poor are doing to wear away the very foundations of character in the lower

strata of society deserves to be more carefully considered than it has been.

"'How do you get along?' said a kind man to an idle hanger-on upon the care of others.

"'Why, we finds it pretty hard now, when winter is just beginning; but pretty soon, when it gets colder, bless you! the trotters comes along, and then we contrives to do very well.' I suppose the '*trotters*' must come along till society learns to walk in ways more consecrated to the welfare of all. But their well-meant and perhaps necessary, but sadly imperfect mission, would be ended if all men of the higher classes were like Joseph Curtis."

This suggestion of Dr. Dewey might be followed out and supported if it were possible to ascertain how many human beings have been saved from destructive habits and final poverty, and made self-depending and independent men by the patient inculcations of Joseph Curtis—"rule upon rule, and precept upon precept."

After Dr. Dewey's removal, Mr. Curtis became a member of Dr. Bellows's congregation,

and how he esteemed him his eloquent sermon has told.

Though thus worshiping with Unitarians, proud as we might be to claim him, our pride would be our shame after his own profession of faith. In the words of Micah, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." This was the text to this great and good man's whole life, and one might as well expect the sunshine and rain of the universal providence to fall on one little garden-spot as to pen in the fold of any particular sect this disciple of Christ, whom all sects must write *Christian*.

We fitly close our memoir with the closing passage of Dr. Bellows's sermon, to which answered the moistened eyes of an immense congregation, gathered to offer their tribute, not to a political leader, not to a statesman, not to a man of literary renown, but to "one who loved his fellow-men," and showed his love by his works.

"Ah! beloved and revered friend," said Dr.

Bellows, bending from his desk over the coffin that contained the remains of that friend, "what have we to do but lay thy sacred dust to rest? No more can we welcome thee to these seats of worship. Thy benignant face can no more turn its sympathetic eyes up to this altar. Thy white locks wave no longer about thy bent shoulders. Thy pleasant voice is hushed; thy friendly hand is cold; but thy heart beats still in the better world. Thou art joined to thy Master, to the early companions of thy usefulness, to the children thou hast led in the way of duty and truth, and who in thousands have gone before thee to welcome thee to thy reward. Farewell! These lips have committed no purer soul than thine to the grave; and told the story of no life more worthy the imitation and respect of men, or whose acceptance in Heaven is more fully secured by Him who 'went about doing good,' and who said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'"

THE END.

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